

FOR LOVE AND FOR CHIVALRY

by

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Adapted from Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale"

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FADE IN:

The sound of clopping horses, birds chirping, indistinct chatter.

SUPER ON BLACK: "England 1382 C.E. Each spring, thousands of pilgrims travel to Canterbury to visit the shrine of the martyr Thomas à Becket, patron saint of the sick."

EXT. ON THE ROAD TO CANTERBURY, ENGLAND - DAY

Fade in to the face of a pretty NUN, listening intently to the CLERK. He is amusing her with a comical tale, their heads bobbing gently as they ride side by side, for love is in the air.

Pull back to see the SQUIRE riding on a horse in front of the Clerk's horse. The Squire is twisted completely around so he can glare in jealousy at the Clerk. The Clerk stops his chatter to stare back at the Squire, who suddenly becomes embarrassingly aware that riding next to him...

Pull back to reveal SIR KNIGHT, the Squire's father, watching him with wry amusement. There is a sound of commotion behind this foursome. Pull back to see a line of fifteen pairs of horses carrying medieval pilgrims of every colorful description against a lush green spring backdrop. In a wave of excited interest, each turns back in his saddle to see:

A LITTLE MAN running on foot, leading a magnificent black stallion. The two pass to the side of the laughing and gesticulating pilgrims. The Little Man leads his horse some fifty yards ahead into a small corral beside a roadside inn.

Pan back to the lead pilgrim pair. The MILLER, a large gruff man has a set of bagpipes strapped to his side, which gently wheeze some soft discordant notes with each ambled step. Next to him, the HOST stands up in his stirrups, twists around and shouts down the pilgrim line.

HOST

St. Thomas' Watering Place! We'll
rest here for the nonce.

He dismounts. The other pilgrims follow suit and the group leads their horses into the corral, whose gate is held wide open by the Little Man who mutely gestures with a happy idiotic smile for the pilgrims to enter.

The Knight glances over at a heavy set well-dressed rider who dismounts with an effort.

FRANKLIN

Ooh, I'm too old for this.

The Knight grins, dismounts, ties up his horse, and walks into the inn with his son and the other pilgrims.

INT. TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Inside, the Knight sees crude tables being hastily wiped down by a 7-yr-old girl, LITTLE EMILY, and two 8-yr-old boys, PAUL and ALLEN.

PAUL

Not like that. I'll do it. You go feed the horses.

ALLEN

Fine. Come on, Emily, let's go feed the horses.

LITTLE EMILY

Splendid.

PAUL

I want her here with me.

ALLEN

Who cares what you want.

Allen shoves Paul. Paul responds by jumping on Allen, and the two fall to the floor, scrapping and cursing childishly.

Ignoring the children for the most part, the denizens are moving with some excitement from table to table.

A sour-looking REEVE is seated with a fiddle-shaped instrument on his lap. He winds the crank extending from one end and fingers little wooden keys on its neck. The droning hurdy-gurdy produces a whining plaintive melody.

The Squire, sitting to the right of the Reeve, puts a medieval flute to his lips and begins a sweet lively melody in counterpoint with the Reeve. He unknowingly jostles the Clerk trying in vain to read a book.

Little Emily hides under the Knight's table in front of his mail-clad legs, watching the boys wrestle playfully, until the Host sends them to the kitchen. Allen winks at Little Emily just before he runs out. She giggles.

Sitting to the left of the Reeve, the FRIAR begins plucking a troubadour harp.

The WIFE OF BATH happily and vigorously dances with the MANCIPLE.

Paul puts a bowl of soup in front of the Knight, who scans the room of pilgrims.

The Nun dances with the PRIORESS.

The PARDONER dances with the SUMMONER.

The Knight stirs his soup thoughtfully

The HOST surveys the rowdy scene, arms akimbo.

HOST

Hold!

The music grinds to a ragged halt, and the ruckus abates a little. The Host crosses to the Knight's table and turns.

HOST

Now then!
When we left for Canterbury, all
of you promised to tell a tale.
And he who tells the tale I judge
to be the best shall be the winner
of a free supper at everyone
else's cost!

The Host holds up a fist filled with straw.

HOST

Now choose a straw.

The mob of pilgrims grabs at the straws in excitement, leaving but one. The Host turns slowly on the Knight with relish.

HOST

Sir Knight?!

The Knight glances suspiciously at the Host's hand, which is holding one straw.

There is a knowing look on the Wife of Bath's face. The Knight gamely plucks the final straw. Short. The entire party huzzahs and guffaws.

A smiling MONK sits next to the LAWYER.

WIFE OF BATH

Sir Knight, pray tell a tale of
chivalry.

CLERK

Or a tale of romance.

LAWYER

An adventure.

SQUIRE

(sitting on the Nun's
other side)

A story of love!

The Nun glances happily at the men on either side of her, then returns her attention to the Knight.

KNIGHT

Long ago in ancient Greece, King
Creon ruled the city of Thebes
with an iron hand.

The MANCIPLE smiles.

KNIGHT

Now it came to pass that an
alliance of seven kings threatened
Thebes. The great army of the
Argytes advanced on that city.
Creon turned to the great seer
Tiresius to ask what must be done
to ensure a victory for Thebes.
The city gained its victory, but
at great cost. Outside the city,
the slain warriors of both sides
lay everywhere.

The Knight bites into a piece of roast fowl thoughtfully.

KNIGHT

After the great victory, Creon
refused last rites to any of the
dead.

FRANKLIN

He let them rot on the battle-
field?

PAUL, ALLEN, AND LITTLE EMILY

Eeewwww!

WIFE OF BATH

Men make a mess of everything.

KNIGHT

Ah, but it's on women that our
tale turns!

The pilgrim women show keen interest.

KNIGHT

The great lady Antigone had lost
her two brothers in the war, and
now, with a host of widows, she
made petition to the king.

INT. COURT OF KING CREON IN THEBES - DAY

CREON (played by the Manciple) silently surveys the noble women
before him. ANTIGONE (played by the Prioress) is in her
twenties. QUEEN CAPANEUS is a tall woman in her fifties,
charismatically attractive with a firm determination that plays
in her eyes and voice. Creon turns to his scribe.

CREON

Have my dogs eaten yet?

The women recoil.

SCRIBE

Yes, your Majesty.

ANTIGONE

Your Majesty -

CREON

When we were under attack, and
Tiresius spoke his "vision," all
you cared about was saving
yourselves.

CAPANEUS

Your Majesty, we all mourned --

CREON

My son sacrificed himself - for
what?

ANTIGONE

Uncle, your nephews, my brothers
lie unburied.
I beg you to let flames free their
spirits.

CREON

All who fought killed my son! None shall be buried. None shall be burned.

ANTIGONE

My lord, the fallen must have their last rites.

CREON

I'm the master here! I make the law!

ANTIGONE

The "law" of the last rites was made in heaven by the Master of us all.

CREON

Capaneus?! Remind my niece of the penalty for interfering with the corpses.

Creon exits the hall, which signals the end of the interview.

EXT. GATE OF THEBES - DAY

A torch-bearing Antigone emerges, followed by Queen Capaneus and the widows in black. Their numbers have doubled to some twenty.

EXT. FIELD OF DEAD - DAY

Antigone passes through the field of corpses. Arriving at the body of one of her brothers, she sets the torch nearby, kneels by him, and prays silently.

Creon's guards arrive behind her. She opens her eyes and, ignoring their presence, stands, picks up the torch, and tilts it to her brother's pyre. A guard's hand clamps on her wrist, halting the torch's progress.

INT. TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Little Emily's eyes look down from the Knight's face. The Knight watches her play with a bit of parchment.

KNIGHT

Several day's ride to the east and
fresh from his victory over the
Amazons, having taken their queen
as his wife, King Theseus and his
army were beginning to break camp.
The Queen's sister - Princess
Emily -

Little Emily looks up, surprised because he used her name in his story. The Nun and the other pilgrims are delighted.

KNIGHT

Princess Emily was examining some
precious parchments.

Little Emily smiles, mouth open, and enraptured.

INT. RICHLY APPOINTED SMALL TENT - EARLY MORNING

EMILY (played by the Nun) pours over some parchment scrolls.
PIROTHUS (played by the Franklin) looks on, dressed in a handsome Phoenician style. He is a shrewd-looking heavy-set man in his fifties, tough with men and tender with women.

EMILY

They're exquisite. Tales of love -
how many?

PIROTHUS

Fifty-two. Translated from Phoeni-
cian, Egyptian, Syrian, and Sanskrit.

EMILY

Where did you get them?, my Lord Pirothus?

PIROTHUS

Traveling. Trading. Except for
those from Egypt.

EMILY

Oh?

PIROTHUS

Pharoah's queen gave those to me.

EMILY

I see.

PIROTHUS

(clears his throat)

This tale is my favorite. I got it
in Thebes from an old friend. It's
about Lady Dorigen, the knight
Aviragus, and ~~the~~ wealthy young
man, Aurelius! ^a ←

EMILY

Two boys and a girl!

Emily smiles. A horn blows.

LATER IN ROCKY TERRAIN

Foot soldiers marching several abreast are followed by a long
supply train of oxen-drawn carts, pack animals, and horses, with
two large soldiers bringing up the rear.

In the lead next to Emily and Pirothus on horseback, QUEEN
HYPOLYTA (played by the Wife of Bath) rides in a chariot beside
a contented KING THESEUS (played by the Knight). Theseus looks
puzzled. He raises his hand to halt the army.

THESEUS

What is it?

A view of the valley shows that it is covered with small black
dots.

HYPOLYTA

Widows.

Theseus signals the army forward.

}

In the valley, Queen Capaneus looks up.

LATER IN LOW HILLS

Theseus signals a halt. Pull back to reveal hundreds of widows blocking the army.

THESEUS

Who are you?

CAPANEUS

(falling to her
knees, followed in
waves by all the
widows.)

My lord, have mercy on our woe and
our distress. I am Capaneus.

HYPOLYTA

Queen Capaneus?

CAPANEUS

There is no one of us all who has
not lost her husband during the
siege of Thebes. And now the king
shames our dead. He will not let
them be buried or burned, but sets
his dogs to eat them out of spite.

PIROTHUS

Creon.

HYPOLYTA

What does her highness Antigone
say about this?

CAPANEUS

Antigone? Nothing.

HYPOLYTA

Nothing?

CAPANEUS

Creon had her buried alive next to her brother's corpse. I watched and did nothing.

HYPOLYTA

(she turns in outrage to Theseus)

My lord --

Theseus silences her with a ^{soft} gesture, steps down from his open chariot, and crosses to Pirothus, who dismounts to meet him. Emily goes to Hypolyta, and together they try to help Capaneus to her feet, but she refuses and stays on her knees, eyes fixed on Theseus.

CAPANEUS

Help us, my lord!

EMILY

My lord, do you not --

THESEUS

Pirothus?

PIROTHUS

Creon's one army defeated the seven united against him. You might add thousands of Athenians to the slain and gain nothing.

HYPOLYTA

If I was buried alive...

Theseus looks annoyed at Hypolyta. Hypolyta and Emily kneel with Capaneus.

PIROTHUS

You could try an ultimatum first.

Theseus scans the widows in black and looks back over his army.

Smash cut to coffin interior, next a panicked Antigone screaming unheard, no sound, pulling up through the ground three more caskets with women already suffocated, another bulging)

Smash cut to pilgrim knight " --- alive, " cuts to horrified nun and wife

THESEUS

We'll make camp here.

(to Emily)

Organize the widows.

EMILY

Thank you, my Lord, if there is anything...

THESEUS

A soft gesture to Emily then
(turning to Hypolyta)

Where are Blister and Cane?

HYPOLYTA

You assigned them to the rear guard.

THESEUS

Right!

At the dusty end of the halted long supply line, two dirty and very big menacing men with three-day growths of beard walk side by side, swords and daggers in their belts.

CANE (played by the Host) has close-cropped red hair; BLISTER (played by the Miller) has equally close-cropped dirty blond hair. Looking at them full in the face is like looking at Death.

BLISTER

Shut up about that!

Cane shoots a poisonous look at Blister, who surprises him with a shove. Cane quickly regains his balance, moves towards Blister and throws a left hook surprise.

Blister blocks it and simultaneously brings up his knee, which Cane deflects with his own. Blister steps back, and in one smooth motion draws his sword and swings. His sword is blocked by Cane's, whose body then is surprisingly propelled into Blister.

Reveal Theseus putting down his foot, having shoved Cane. Both Cane and Blister drop to kneel before the king.

THESEUS

Stop horsing around. Follow me.

Theseus walks off. Jumping up, Blister and Cane follow in stride, sheathing their swords in unison, eager as dogs to please their master.

CANE
(to Blister in a
hiss)
I'm gonna tell Ma. (Mom?)

EXT. A ROCKY RISE ABOVE ATHENIAN CAMP - LATER

Theseus meets with Pirothus on a rocky rise. He hands Pirothus a sealed parchment.

THESEUS
Take this to Creon.

PIROTHUS
And if he doesn't respond well --

THESEUS
(referring to Blister
and Cane who stand
nearby)
That's what they're for. (Blister smiles, Cane tightens
his neck to one side so a few bones loudly
correct,)

EXT. ATHENIAN ARMY CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Hypolyta and Emily wend their way through busy soldiers and widows noisily setting up camp.

HYPOLYTA
If there's a battle, Theseus
doesn't want me in it. I told him
that when our men need us, we
Amazon women fight by their sides,
come what may.

EMILY
I'm ready.

HYPOLYTA
Not you, Em.

EMILY

I'm old enough to marry, so I'm
old enough to fight.

Unobserved, Queen Capaneus watches from the shadows.

HYPOLYTA

You could die.

EMILY

Maybe.

Hypolyta reaches out to touch Emily and suddenly realizes Queen
Capaneus is there, so hidden in her black garb that they hadn't
seen her.

HYPOLYTA

Oh!

CAPANEUS

Your Highness.

Capaneus exits. They watch her go.

HYPOLYTA

Did you see her there?

EMILY

No. Look.

She picks up a ram's horn to examine it.

HYPOLYTA

Give me that.

She grabs the horn and blows a few pathetic sounds.

EMILY

Oooo, Hyppo the Herald.

HYPOLYTA

Shut up, Emmie.

She tries again, just as badly. Emily grabs the ram's horn and has similar results.

HYPOLYTA
Do it like the Herald.

EMILY
Purple in the face?

She takes a pompous buffoonish stance, feet planted wide apart, and tries again. This time she gets a wobbly sound out.

HYPOLYTA
That's it! You have to look like
an ass to make it -

Pull back to reveal the upset HERALD.

HERALD
(bowing neatly)
Your highnesses.

Emily hands him the horn and the women walk away briskly.

HYPOLYTA
Oops.

EXT. A SHORT DISTANCE FROM THEBES - DAY

Pirothus, Blister, and Cane pull to a stop and look into the distance from their small promontory. Between them and the walled city of Thebes is a vast plain covered with rotting corpses. In places, dogs and carrion birds eat them.

PIROTHUS
Oh beautiful Thebes, what have
they done to you?

The smell is overwhelming; Pirothus covers his nose and mouth with a scarf. Blister takes a deep, satisfying breath.

PIROTHUS
Stay here. When I return, I may
bring unwanted company with me.

Blister and Cane smile in anticipation.

FADE TO:

INT. MEDIEVAL INN

Host and Miller grin at each other.

HOST

That's what I'm talking... They
don't take any cock and bull.

FADE TO:

INT. COCK AND BULL TAVERN IN THEBES - DAY

SUPER: "Cock and Bull Tavern"

Inside, waitresses cater to the tastes of the rich. PALAMON
(played by the Clerk) makes his way impatiently into an inner
hallway. There are a dozen room openings down the hall. Intense
"romantic activity" is heard from the various rooms.

PALAMON

Arcite, we'll be late for Creon's
court!

ARCITE (played by the Squire) bursts through a curtain,
adjusting his clothes. He stomps out of the hall and through the
main crowded dive of the tavern. Palamon hurries to catch up.
Arcite stops and turns on Palamon, nearly causing a collision.

ARCITE

Do you work at being an ass or
does it come naturally?

Arcite turns, takes two steps, then turns back on Palamon again.

ARCITE

Why is it I never see you with any
women?

PALAMON

(shouting)

Because I don't love any of them!

A sudden hush comes over the dive. The women glare at Palamon.

ARCITE

You idiot! I love them all!

Several women begin catcalling to the princes.

PALAMON

WHY --Why can't you love just one
woman, completely?

The women looking on melt.

INT. CREON'S HALL - DAY

The King's Hall is huge and shadow-filled with massive Doric columns. Shafts of sunlight cut diagonally across the space, partially illuminating red, purple, and black carpets. Elite guards are posted around the periphery of the hall. Three of Creon's generals stand to the right of a circular dias, which supports a small ornately carved wood throne. Creon stands in front of it, a scribe by his side.

ARCITE

(whispering to
Palamon)

I don't believe it!

PALAMON

What?!

CREON

Ah, Pirothus, what a surprise!

ARCITE

(to Palamon)

It's Pirothus. My father's friend.

PALAMON

Pirothus?

ARCITE
He's a rich Hebrew trader.

CREON
(to Pirothus)
What brings you to Thebes?

PALAMON
(to Arcite)
Oh. What's a Hebrew?

PIROTHUS
(approaching)
I bear a message from the King of
Athens, your highness.

CREON
Theseus? Are you his friend?

PIROTHUS
As a merchant --

CREON
I thought you were Our friend?

Palamon shifts uneasily.

PIROTHUS
Your majesty, I strive to be a
friend to all the kings of Greece.

CREON
The message?

Pirothus shows the scroll. The scribe crosses down to him,
retrieves it, crosses up to King Creon, bows his head, and
offers the scroll.

CREON
Open it.

The scribe opens it and kneels before Creon, holding the scroll
for the king to read.

Creon snatches the scroll and crosses down to Pirothus. He holds the scroll up overhead, where a shaft of light illuminates it. He peers at it like a pompous pedant, glancing over at his generals for audience support. They chuckle nervously.

CREON

"Burn your dead or fight."

(showing Pirothus)

Is that all?

PIROTHUS

Apparently, your majesty.

CREON

"Burn your dead or fight." Athens is threatening us. How should we respond?

GENERALS

Death! Death to Athens! Death!

Creon's eyes begin to tear. Then regaining his composure, he looks for and finds Palamon and Arcite, who look uncertain.

CREON

Prince Palamon, Prince Arcite.

There's a fleeting recognition of Arcite by Pirothus, who then turns impassive.

ARCITE AND PALAMON

Your majesty?

CREON

There's to be a battle. The three of us will lead it. I confer on you the rank and duty of Generals of the Army of Thebes.

GENERAL

Your majesty, neither of them has ever proven himself in battle.

CREON

(to Palamon and
Arcite while
indicating the three
generals)

Your first order will be to place
these men on the front lines to
lead the charge against the
Athenian army.

(looking at the
startled generals)

Let those who love "Death" be the
first to die.

Creon drops the scroll and sweeps from the hall with the scribe
and four elite guards following. The generals make a huffy show
of stomping out, but are quickly surrounded by the remaining
elite guard and marched out a side exit.

Pirothus quickly strides out, leaving Palamon and Arcite alone.

ARCITE

What just happened in here?

INT. TORCH-LIT PALACE HALL - NIGHT

Creon strides briskly, his scribe trying to catch up.

CREON

To the captain of the elite guard:
Arrest Lord Pirothus.

Catching up, the scribe readies his stylus for more dictation.

CREON

Go.

The scribe runs in the opposite direction.

EXT. OUTSIDE THEBES - DAY

A dozen of Creon's elite guards gallop up the small hill in pursuit of Pirothus, whose horse is just cresting the hill and disappearing over it.

Just as the group of riders reaches the top of the hill, a large rope is pulled taut, tripping the galloping horses and throwing them all into a chaotic pile. Blister and Cane efficiently dispatch the elite guards before they have time to recover.

EXT. ATHENIAN CAMP - DAY

Pirothus, Blister, and Cane amble on horseback into the Athenian camp. Everywhere there is furious training activity. Mock combat with wooden swords. Stunning bizarre group tactics. Screw-ups.

The trio dismounts, and a young aide takes their horses. Pirothus spots Theseus in the center of the mix. On small hills and rises, the widows watch.

Pirothus makes his way to Theseus, who is studying a small group of combatants.

THESEUS

(to Pirothus)

You made it.

PIROTHUS

It was a trip to Hell and back. I
made a map of the city's streets.
The great gate may be of interest.

Blister and Cane hit each other in boy play. Theseus gives them a dismissing signal. The pair runs off, making a thorough nuisance of themselves.

THESEUS

What else?

PIROTHUS

Creon has appointed the young
princes Arcite and Palamon as
generals of his army. The three of
them will lead the attack on you.

THESEUS

And?

PIROTHUS

Neither prince has ever fought in
a battle.

Theseus laughs.

PIROTHUS

(concerned)

Prince Arcite is my friend.

EXT. THEBES, OUTSIDE THE COCK AND BULL TAVERN - DAY

PALAMON

Don't go in there!

ARCITE

Why not?!

PALAMON

You have a command from your King.

ARCITE

My body belongs to Venus, not Creon.

PALAMON

We can't let our friends fight
while we cower behind the city's
walls.

ARCITE

Your "friends" are rotting on the
field. Mine are in there.

PALAMON

The Athenians could destroy us.

ARCITE
Maybe they should!

Arcite moves to re-enter the tavern.

PALAMON
Don't go in there! Creon --

ARCITE
Creon is mad!

PALAMON
Then do it for the women. Defend
them. Fight for them.

Arcite reconsiders, turns and gently kisses a nearby widow on the cheek. The princes depart, leaving a happily flustered widow.

INT. MEDIEVAL TAVERN - DAY

The Knight pauses. A steaming mug of hot mead is brought to him. He studies the three children playing. The Franklin and the Little Man watch him eagerly.

KNIGHT
In less than two days, the
Athenian army would reach Thebes
and face an army twice their size.

EXT. GREECE - DAY

At the massive open gates and walls of Thebes, strangely, there is no one around. No commerce, no peasants, no guards.

KNIGHT (VO)
Now, there was a small mute man...

Suddenly, cutting a massive gash straight down the wall is a giant V shape of steel.

KNIGHT (VO)
...CON, the King's own artist...

Pull back to reveal a giant hand holding the chisel, with a hammer striking as if from the gods. Pull back farther to reveal Con (played by the Little Man), intently shaping a model of Thebes.

KNIGHT (VO)
...and his friend...

Pull back to reveal...

KNIGHT (VO)
...APO, a blind young man.

Apo (played by the Lawyer) examines parts of the model by touch. Con glances at him with irritation.

KNIGHT (VO)
Lord Pirothus...

Pull back to reveal Pirothus talking animatedly. Chips fly as Con chisels fast and furiously.

KNIGHT (VO)
...described Thebes in detail to the world's greatest artist. And watching it all was...

Pull back to reveal --

KNIGHT (VO)
...Blister, the King's bodyguard.

PIROTHUS
Brilliant! Absolutely brilliant!
Blister! Carry the model to the King's tent!

Blister looks put out but moves to comply.

APO
Watch out for that rock!

Blister trips and just catches himself and preserves the model. He glares back at blind Apo in fury and departs. Pirothus follows, throwing an amused grin back at Apo and Con.

INT. THESEUS' PAVILION TENT - NIGHT

Theseus stands behind a large round table holding court in his torch-lit tent. On the table are two models -- one with the walled city of Thebes and nearby hills, and the other a larger scale model of the city's gate and courtyard.

Standing around the table with Theseus are Hypolyta, Emily, Pirothus, and GENERAL HERMES. Blister and Cane watch closely two paces back from a round table.

PIROTHUS

(to Emily)

It took Con less than an hour to carve.

HERMES

My Lord Pirothus, if you don't mind, we have a war to plan.

Pirothus glances in surprise at Theseus, who looks noncommittal.

HERMES

(to Theseus)

Your highness, the Theban army is nearly twice the size of ours. This war is suicide.

EMILY

Not if we employ the widows in the battle.

This idea interests Theseus.

HERMES

You can't be serious.

Emily looks at Hypolyta.

HERMES

Every man who pauses to defend a
woman will be cut down. Princess.

HYPOLYTA

All women are capable of doing
what needs to be done. General.

HERMES

War is not for girls.

Hypolyta makes a feint as if she is about to draw her sword. The general instinctively grabs for his dagger, but it's missing. Emily is holding it innocently and slowly extends it to the general, pommel first.

The general nastily swipes to retrieve it but comes up empty handed. Hypolyta has it. Swiftly, she stabs it into the table in front of the general.

THESEUS

That's enough! General, maybe
these ladies have some tactical
ideas worth considering.

HERMES

No woman's going to tell me what
to do!

The furious general swipes again at his dagger, but this time the pommel is split in two by the King's sword. The general's fingers are just a frozen inch from being severed.

THESEUS

Take your dagger and get out.

Blister sniggers. Humiliated and enraged, the general takes several seconds to pry loose his dagger and leave the tent. Theseus looks at Cane and raises his eyebrows. Cane nods and exits the tent.

HYPOLYTA

The widows can make all the
difference in the fight against
Thebes.

THESEUS

That may be true. But I don't want
you and Emily in direct combat.

HYPOLYTA

You'll have to tell Emily that
yourself.

THESEUS

(looking around,
unable to find her)
Emily?!

Emily's bodiless face appears out of the darkness. As it comes
closer to Theseus and the table, the torches inside the tent
illuminate the black robes and cowl of the widow's garb that
Emily is wearing.

EMILY

My Lord?

Theseus looks with surprised interest at Emily.

THESEUS

Talk to me.

Emily and Hypolyta move closer to the model to begin discourse.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Through the long night, Theseus directs the planning session.
- Theseus listens while the women and Pirothus make suggestions.
- Outside the tent, General Hermes mounts up and exits camp. Cane watches him, unseen.
- Cane discreetly re-enters the tent and nods to Theseus, who turns back to the models.

LATER

PIROTHUS

That platform looks risky.

HYPOLYTA

It's brilliant!

Theseus smiles at Hypolyta.

THESEUS

A horn will signal the change in
tactics with a long blast. We'll
set up camp here.

Looking first at Pirothus, Theseus turns to Blister and Cane.

THESEUS

Blister, Cane - I want Princes
Arcite and Palamon alive.

CANE

Done, your majesty.

THESEUS

We need two men to work inside the
gates. They probably won't survive.

BLISTER

I know just the two for the job!

His words worry Emily.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF THEBES - DAWN

Apo and Con sit on a slowly moving cart in peasant garb. The great gates of Thebes are just illuminated by the dawn. Guards on the sides of the gate give a cursory glance at Apo and Con's enormous load of kindling as they enter the city.

EXT. ATHENIAN CAMP - DAY

Theseus watches Blister as he practices throwing short clubs.

Blister looks to Theseus, who nods his approval and briskly strides away to Cane, who is supervising men forming a platform over their heads with interlocking shields. Three pairs of men hold shields at different levels to form steps up to the platform.

EXT. THEBES - NIGHT

SUPER: "Thebes"

Creon paces the parapets with his scribe and generals Palamon and Arcite. In the distance, hundreds of campfires can be seen on the hill overlooking Thebes.

Unseen by the King, on a rooftop across the courtyard, Apo and Con drag a huge bundle of kindling.

APO

That should be enough.

Pull back to reveal a huge mound of kindling tottering on the roof's edge, held back precariously by a couple of flimsy sticks.

Up on the tower, looking out over the field of dead, nervous archers, spaced every few feet, busy themselves for an assault. A few look down on the King and his generals standing on the parapets.

CREON

When did the Athenians set up camp?

PALAMON

No one knows for sure, your majesty. One moment it was dark, then a shout went up and suddenly -- hundreds of campfires.

CREON

General Arcite, divide the army into three battalions. You take command of the left; Palamon the right, and I shall command - Where's my scribe? Where was I?

ARCITE

(carefully)

You were about to mention which
part of the army you would
command, your majesty.

CREON

Yes. The center.

Palamon and Arcite exchange glances.

PALAMON

Are we to attack or defend, your
majesty?

CREON

(laughing a little)

Both.

(then confidentially
to both his generals)

Secret intelligence has just come
to my attention.

(then more broadly)

Carry on, generals.

Creon climbs down the steps from the parapets, leaving the
unhappy and perplexed princes behind.

ARCITE

Mad.

EXT. ARCHERS' TOWER - NIGHT

ALERT ARCHER

Captain --

The preoccupied Archer Captain looks out where the Alert Archer
points. Three pyres spread widely apart in the battlefield
punctuate the night with their flames.

INT. PRINCES' ROOM - NIGHT

Arcite is dressing Palamon in his armor. Both are grim.

ARCITE

We've never been of use to anyone,
much less leading a battle. This
is absurd.

He cinches up a strap.

PALAMON

Oww. It's too tight.
(panicked)
I can't breathe.

ARCITE

Hold on.
(adjusting it)
There.

He clasps Palamon's hand.

ARCITE

No matter what.

PALAMON

No matter what.

EXT. GATE OF THEBES - PREDAWN LIGHT

Theban troops assemble in crowded formation behind a small cavalry facing the gate. Arcite and Palamon ride into position at the head of the cavalry just shy of the great gate. Flag carriers designating the Right and the Left ride by them.

CREON

Generals Palamon, Arcite, meet
Herpes.

HERMES

That's Hermes, Your Majesty.

CREON

Former Athenian General Herpes...

Arcite rolls his eyes behind Creon's back.

CREON
...is now special intelligence for
Thebes.

PALAMON
General.

CREON
We attack at first light.

APO (WINCH GUARD)
(Shouting down from the
winch platform, Con
standing next to him)
Your majesty, I see seven pyres
burning over the field.

CREON
Who are those clowns?

The sun rises on the walls.

PALAMON
Raise the gate!

The gate rises steadily. Then suddenly, a piece of the mechanism
breaks, splinters exploding out, and the gate halts with a lurch
at four feet off the ground. The two odd guards struggle with
it, without success.

Zoom in on an untidy mound of thick rope at the feet of the
struggling two.

CREON
(in disgust)
Dismount!

The entire cavalry dismounts, including royalty and flag
bearers.

CREON
(looking up at the
tower and parapets)
Where are my archers? Scribe!?

SCRIBE

Your majesty?

CREON

Take a note: after the battle,
have the winch guards and the
archers executed.

APO (WINCH GUARD)

(Muttering to
himself)

Already done, your majesty.

Cut to heaps of dead archers lying in the tower out of view.

EXT. OUTSIDE THEBES - DAY

Now there are a dozen funeral pyres spread out over the vast
field of dead. Several widows tend each fire. Bizarre black
shadows cover the field.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Viewed from the center of the field, the Athenian camp on the
hill appears to be waking up for the day. Campfires are
smoking, soldiers are milling about.
- In a 180-degree counterclockwise sweeping view from the
center of the field, Creon's army is just beginning to emerge
from the great gate of Thebes.
- In a continuing 180-degree counterclockwise sweep back to the
Athenian camp, a great commotion can be seen as soldiers
hastily run back and forth, causing a series of accidents,
knocking down tripods and a tent here and there. Some ragged
drums and distant shouting can be heard.

With Creon and General Hermes in the lead, followed closely by
Arcite and Palamon, about a third of the Theban forces have
emerged from the low-slung gate. Creon smiles.

GENERAL HERMES

They aren't ready. This isn't like
Theseus.

On the field, Creon sees Queen Capaneus deliberately set her husband's pyre on fire, never taking her eyes off Creon.

CREON

(to an aide)

Kill her.

AIDE

Yes, your majesty.

(runs off)

Looking at each other, Palamon and Arcite are both shocked and ready to revolt. Suddenly, a huge cracking sound is heard.

Cut to the jammed wooden winch giving way with a crack. The great gate falls with a crash to the ground, trapping the greater part of Creon's army jammed in the courtyard. The antics of the two "clowns" attempting to fix the winch are a cause of mirth to many of the soldiers.

A dozen Theban detachments chase the disparate groups of widows. The other black figures waddle-run away, pulling the detachments some distance from the main body of troops.

Gradually and growing ever louder is an eerie horrendous wail. Black ghastly shapes begin to rise slowly out of the shadows all over the field.

The precise marching of the Thebans becomes ragged as the soldiers are distracted by the strange shapes.

Creon's aide runs up to a defiant Capaneus and cuts her down with his sword while passing her. In response, the black shapes at first seem to freeze. Then one of them, in front of Creon, blows a long peal on a ram's horn.

Instantly, several things happen at once. Galvanized by the great queen's death and with shouts of "Capaneus!" the black shapes move fast towards:

SERIES OF SHOTS

- the detachments,
- the Theban soldiers on the field, and
- the walls of Thebes near the gates.

GENERAL HERMES

It's a trap! They're all men!

Hermes gasps, discovering his own dagger sticking in his ribs.
Creon holds it.

CREON

Does this dagger belong to you?
The hilt needs repair.

Creon twists the blade. Hermes falls.

CREON

Once a traitor, always a traitor.

Creon's aide who killed Capaneus is dropped with a score of
arrows.

EXT. AT THE WALLS OF THEBES - CONTINUOUS

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Inside the walls, arrows rain down on Creon's army.
- Reveal black-clad warriors outside the wall shooting arrows
into the jammed courtyard.
- Inside the walls:

THEBAN SERGEANT

Man the parapets!

From one of the parapet stairs, Con slings two stones in rapid
succession to the rigged rooftop kindling, tripping the sticks
that hold the bales in place. They fall in avalanches that block
the two main approaches to the courtyard.

Thebans race to the two narrow stairways, but the "clowns" blocking each of them are killing every man that tries to mount them. The arrows are unrelenting.

EXT. OUTSIDE THEBES - CONTINUOUS

All of the Theban detachments have been quickly slain.

Outside the gates, black-garbed men surround and attack the large remaining body of Theban soldiers. Creon's former generals, now common soldiers, are quickly slain.

Palamon makes a 180° sweep of the field in one direction and back, and then a 180° sweep in the other in mounting alarm, focusing on the wall and gate of Thebes last.

Panicked, Palamon makes a piercing eagle's cry, drawing Arcite's attention. The cry also catches the attention of a slender black-hooded figure, who notices Palamon.

PALAMON

Arcite! The gate!

Arcite turns and begins to work his way back through his own ranks in an effort to get to the gate. Palamon does likewise parallel to him.

Their flag bearers follow them slavishly, and their respective battalions follow the flags, creating a jammed confusion with the center battalion, which strives to follow Creon's flag forward.

Athenian archers on the periphery kill the warriors nearest Creon, leaving him exposed in the midst of his fallen soldiers.

Theseus, flanked by Blister and Cane, cuts his way to Creon. The fight, King to King, is brief. Creon is disarmed. Two black-garbed figures begin to tie Creon. A hood falls off one, revealing Hypolyta.

THESEUS

What the hell!

But Theseus sees a warning look of alarm on Hypolyta's face. He turns and is immediately busy in personal combat. The ram's horn player blows a long peal. A human platform takes shape, the step-shields snap into place, and a protective double ring of black-garbed combatants defends outward.

Blister and Cane haul Creon up the steps of the platform. He goes limp on purpose. Blister and Cane hoist him higher. They are followed by Theseus, Emily and Hypolyta, who have daggers drawn and ready.

Creon is forced into a kneeling position by Blister and Cane, who kneel on each side of him, securing him powerfully. Theseus stands behind, surveying the battle. The women secure the rear points of the platform daggers ready.

Inside Thebes, Con hears the ram's horn and, changing tactics, allows the next Theban to chase him up the steps to the winch. He drops to a sudden crouch. The forward momentum of the Theban carries him over Con.

As the Theban begins to topple over the edge of the small platform, Con whips a pre-arranged rope loop around the Theban's foot. The Theban falls, pulling the rope, which unwraps off a large pulley, leveraging open the gate.

The Theban hangs by one foot, struggling. Apo hears the gate open and the screams of the struggling Theban.

APO

(in a brief respite)

Is there anything that little man
can't do?

Black-garbed Athenians pour through the open gateway into the courtyard. The first warriors create a holding pattern while those who follow rush up the steps to the parapets.

On the battlefield, the princes hear shouts.

THEBAN WARRIORS

The King! The King!

Palamon turns and sees Creon rising above the mass of combat, held by Athenian warriors. Palamon makes a piercing eagle's cry, which pulls Arcite's glance, and yet again attracts Emily's attention.

PALAMON

Arcite! They've got Creon!

Arcite turns and sees Creon's predicament.

ARCITE

Rally to the King! The King!

Suddenly, the confused and besieged tangle of Thebans has a focal point, led by the magnificently charged pair of princes.

From the human platform, Theseus can see the princes leading a countercharge towards him.

THESEUS

Hypolyta -- secure Creon.

Blister and Cane rise and look to Theseus. Hypolyta moves into place, holding Creon by his armor at his shoulders.

THESEUS

Defend!

The "step" soldiers join the defense. Blister and Cane stride rapidly to the platform's edge, dimpling it with their massive steps, and somersault into the fray. But Palamon, with Arcite protecting his rear, has already cut through the ring of defenders.

The Herald raises the horn to his lips awaiting a signal from Theseus. Palamon notices and charges the Herald.

From the platform, Emily counters by throwing her dagger into Palamon's chest. Stunned, he looks up for an instant into Emily's eyes until a swinging ram's horn smashes the side of his head.

As Palamon falls back, Arcite drops his sword and catches him, easing him down. Believing him dead, his great rage focuses on the Herald, who turns in a panic and tries to climb the corner of the human platform. Arcite jumps on him, arm around his throat. The desperate Herald extends out his ram's horn, eyes pleading to Emily.

THESEUS

(to Emily)

The horn!

Blister spies the dire situation, pulls a club from his belt and hurls it, connecting with the back of Arcite's head and neck.

Emily reaches for the horn, but the corner of the platform collapses, dropping the Herald and Arcite and pinning them under struggling men and armor.

Emily slides down the newly created slope, scoops up the ram's horn and places it to her lips, awaiting a signal from Theseus.

Creon uses this moment to revolt, swinging his head, smashing Hypolyta's face. Theseus knocks Creon's head with the hilt of his sword, stunning him. Hypolyta bleeds at the mouth and nose.

THESEUS

(to Hypolyta)

Grab his hair!

Squeamishly, but with grit, Hypolyta grabs Creon's hair through the top of his crown.

Looking down, Theseus sees the protective double ring collapsing from the Theban onslaught. Athenians backing into their own comrades collapse another corner.

Theseus cocks his sword for a horizontal swing to decapitate Creon. Emily readies the ram's horn. Theseus's sword swings through the air. Hypolyta looks away screaming.

Emily blows a long peal from the ram's horn that blends with Hypolyta's scream. Another corner of the platform begins to collapse in the fighting.

In the Theban courtyard, Athenian archers have made it to the parapets and are now raining arrows into the tightly contained massacre.

Emily blows peal after peal. From the hills, dozens of ram's horns are being blown in response.

Hundreds of Athenian soldiers can be seen marching down the hill, pikes lowered, ready for battle.

Theseus holds up his sword in one hand and Creon's head in the other. The leaderless Thebans panic.

The corners of the platform are level again, as each man reasserts himself into position.

The Athenian soldiers marching down the hill are revealed to be women dressed as Athenians, led by a grinning Pirothus.

In the courtyard, Thebans are disarming, encircled by Athenian archers in the parapets, bows cocked. Apo waits impassively. Con sits next to the winch and cries.

In the field the battle winds down.

Emily lowers the horn. At her feet she notices Palamon with her dagger still in his chest, lying next to Arcite, as if even without consciousness, there is a strong bond between them.

Emily moves to Palamon and gently pulls her dagger from his chest. He moans slightly. Then she sees Hypolyta bleeding and rushes to her.

Theseus lowers his sword and drops Creon's head. It's over.

INT. MEDIEVAL TAVERN - DAY

Wooden spoon held high in one hand and the other holding high a cabbage, Paul stands with one foot on willing Allen's chest, whose tongue lolls out. Little Emily claps enthusiastically. But the Pilgrims are generally more pensive and dissatisfied.

The Knight stands and moves to pour himself a mug of mead. He downs it in a great pull.

MILLER

What? Just a bunch of knights
knocking each other about on some
stinkin' field.

HOST

Or knocking up some buffed up
brunettes.

The Summoner laughs. The Manciple wipes ale from his chin.

KNIGHT

Two scurvy pillagers...

Belatedly, the Pardoner and Cook laugh coarsely.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD NEAR THEBES - DAY

Pull back to reveal HONEY (played by the Cook) and GOUGE (played
by the Pardoner).

GOUGE

Get the ring, Honey.

HONEY

I can't. It's stuck.

A shadow falls across Honey, who looks up to see a towering
hooded figure in black mounted on a black stallion.

HONEY

Gouge...

Gouge looks up.

GOUGE

(in a terrified
whisper)

Death...

The figure raises a bloody sword and begins a blood-curdling screech. Honey and Gouge run away. The figure slides off the horse and drops the sword, kneeling to examine Palamon and Arcite. Their bloody faces make them tough to identify.

Reveal the figure in black is Emily, face covered in grime and tears. She listens to see if Arcite is breathing. We hear the sound of breathing. She touches his cheek.

ARCITE'S FEVERISH VISION

In a simple beautiful tunic, Arcite sits on an unmoving but alert black stallion on an endless grassy plain in springtime. A woman's hand reaches from behind him and touches his cheek. Arcite inclines his head into her palm, eyes closed in bliss.

BACK TO SCENE

Emily withdraws her hand and places it on Palamon's forehead.

EMILY

The brave eagle. You're shaking!

Emily casts about for an additional cover. She strips a widow's cloak from a nearby dead Athenian warrior and covers both men.

PALAMON'S FEVERISH VISION

On a perfect open-walled stone gazebo residing in the middle of a still lake surrounded by mountains, Palamon kneels before a lady, her face unseen. She offers her hand. He takes and kisses it, then inclines his head while pressing her hand to his cheek.

BACK TO SCENE

Emily studies the severely wounded princes and then withdraws her hand from the young man's cheek.

EMILY

What women are grieving for you, I wonder.

She hears, then sees an approaching cart.

EMILY

Over here! May Jove have mercy on
you both and bring peace to your
hearts.

(she mounts)

And to mine.

She rides away to the Athenian camp.

LATER

In a clearing, Blister gives orders to Apo and Con.

BLISTER

Transport the princes to Athens.
Since they're royalty, you'll stay
with them and serve them
permanently. Behind bars.

Con's eyes widen in alarm.

EXT. A HILL ABOVE THE BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Theseus and Pirothus survey the battlefield. Neither looks at
the other. Scattered across the field, widows prepare funeral
pyres.

THESEUS

Did you know that my Queen would
be sneaking into battle with her
sister?

PIROTHUS

(turning to Theseus,
disgusted)

That platform of yours was risky
and barbaric.

Both men look angry.

PIROTHUS

I have business to attend to.

Pirothus mounts a pack horse and rides off without looking back.

EXT. ON THE BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Con's face is looking down, moving to the jostle of a ride.

Pull back gradually to reveal Con as he turns from examining his unconscious royal prisoners and gives his attention to driving the cart. Apo sits next to him.

Pull back further to see the cart traveling through the battlefield. First a few burning pyres are visible, then dozens, then hundreds. They blacken the skies, the slow-moving cart a tiny speck of life.

The cart passes through a rocky desolate area.

Arcite regains consciousness and realizes he's in a barred prison cart. Seeing Palamon unconscious beside him, he remembers:

ARCITE'S FLASHBACK TO BOYHOOD - EXT. SPRINGTIME - DAY

BOY ARCITE (played by Allen) and BOY PALAMON (played by Paul), wearing rich Greek tunics, run from boulder to boulder on a lush green hillside.

BOY ARCITE

Now you say it.

He jumps to another boulder.

BOY PALAMON

"This is our vow -- "

BOY ARCITE

Go on.

BOY PALAMON

"-- that I will never --"

BOY ARCITE

-- that we will always --"

BOY PALAMON

-- that we will always help each other."

BOY ARCITE

"No matter what."

BOY PALAMON

"No matter what."

They clasp right hands overhead with a sharp clap.

BOY PALAMON

Arcite, we need a special signal,
in case of danger.

BOY ARCITE

Something we can hear anywhere.

They think hard. Suddenly they hear a distant eagle's cry. They look at each other. Arcite tries to imitate the sound.

BOY PALAMON

Perfect!

Their faces distorted, they practice the cry at greater distances from each other.

Boy Arcite, out of sight from Boy Palamon, sends out several signals but is puzzled at hearing nothing back. Suddenly there is a series of faint signals. Arcite's eyes widen in alarm and runs toward the sounds.

Boy Arcite finds Boy Palamon unconscious.

BACK TO SCENE IN CART

Palamon moans softly by his side. Arcite sees the two drivers. Palamon moans again. Arcite feels his forehead.

ARCITE
You're burning up.

There's a flask of water next to Palamon's head. Arcite wets the sleeve of his tunic and wipes his cousin's forehead. Palamon is delirious.

PALAMON
(weakly)
Philostrates.

Arcite remembers.

INT. - LATER IN ARCITE'S FLASHBACK TO BOYHOOD

In a richly appointed chamber, Boy Palamon lies weakly on an assortment of cushions, a blanket covering him. A parchment, quill and ink are on the bedside table, a work in progress.

Boy Arcite waits quietly and solemnly at the side of the bed. A young NURSE places a compress on Boy Palamon's shoulder and pulls up the comforter.

NURSE
The doctor says you're to rest
quietly and keep warm.
(looks meaningfully
at Boy Arcite then
back at Boy Palamon)
The bee swelling is coming down,
he says, but the poison will
spread if you don't rest. You do
want to get better.

BOY ARCITE
He will.

NURSE
With no help from you, I'm sure.

Nurse smiles at them both warmly and tends to folding blankets. Boy Arcite immediately jumps onto the bed from pillow to pillow, stabbing the air with a little wooden sword. Boy Palamon picks up the parchment and quill on his bedside table.

BOY ARCITE
(referring to the Nurse)
Look there, the maiden has been
kidnapped by the dragon!

NURSE
(flatly)
Help. Help.

BOY ARCITE
(looking back at Boy
Palamon)
Where were we?

BOY PALAMON
"And then the glorious knight
mounted his steed and cried out--"

BOY ARCITE
(brandishing his sword)
I will save you!

BOY PALAMON
(scribbling away)
"-- for love ..."

INT. MEDIEVAL TAVERN - DAY

A dirty Paul looks up at the Knight.

PAUL
Did they have knights in the olden
times?

LITTLE EMILY
And ladies?

KNIGHT
There have always been and shall
always be knights and ladies where
the spirit of chivalry thrives.

BACK TO FLASHBACK

BOY ARCITE

-- For love --

The Nurse giggles quietly.

BOY PALAMON

"-- and for chivalry."

BOY ARCITE

(whispering to Palamon)

Does it have to be love?

BOY PALAMON

Of course it has to be love.

BOY ARCITE

(sigh)

I will save you, fair maiden, for
love and for chivalry.

BOY PALAMON

I will save you, fair princess.

BOY ARCITE

I will save you, fair princess.
Who am I, anyway?

BOY PALAMON

(while writing it)

Philostrates?

BOY ARCITE

Philostrates!

Boy Arcite laughs. But Boy Palamon begins to pant and look
panicked. He looks desperately around at the walls of the room.

BOY PALAMON

I can't breathe.

NURSE

(exiting quickly)

I'll get the doctor.

BOY ARCITE

I'll open up the windows. Pretend
you're outside.

Boy Palamon drops the quill and parchment, and turns over on his side toward the open window. Boy Arcite rushes up to him. Boy Palamon's eyes close.

BOY ARCITE

You can't die now, you idiot. You
have to save the Princess.

Boy Arcite puts the wooden sword in Palamon's hand. Palamon grips it weakly.

BOY ARCITE

It's your turn, Philostrates.

Boy Palamon's grip tightens.

BACK TO SCENE IN CART

Arcite frantically casts about for something. He spots a figurine of The Goddess Venus in the straw, grabs it, and puts it into Palamon's hand.

ARCITE

Philostrates.

PALAMON

(weakly)

It's my turn.

Palamon's grip tightens around the figurine.

Pull back to see the cart slowly traveling along a road cut through fields of wheat being harvested in the hot sun by peasants in steady rhythmic fashion.

EXT. CAMP ON THE ROAD TO ATHENS - NIGHT

Next to a fire in high blaze, Arcite is reclining close to Palamon. He watches weakly as Con flicks rocks at blind Apo, who hits them away with his staff adeptly. He misses. Con grunts.

APO

I know: see it with my ears. I
haven't missed many.

Con smiles. He takes hot water from a pot, pours it into a mug, and then takes an oddly decorated pouch and pours some of the powdered contents into the steaming mug.

Con begins to dribble the contents of the mug onto Palamon's slightly parted lips. Alarmed, Arcite reflexively slaps away the mug, irrationally thinking "poison." Con gestures that the drink is to help Palamon sleep and cool his fever.

Arcite withdraws cautiously but lets Con proceed.

LATER

With the campfire burning low, Palamon awakens in the night, lying on his side. With the fire as a backdrop, he focuses on three odd small carved figurines placed on a rock near his head. One looks like the medieval Knight, another like the Nun, and the third like the Wife of Bath. The small figures look like they are observing Palamon.

EXT. ON THE ROAD TO ATHENS - DAY

The cart travels along a dusty road. Arcite and Palamon lie in the cart, foreheads almost touching. Each is covered by a blanket. They whisper to each other.

PALAMON

(weak and
desperately)
I can't be locked up.

ARCITE

Tonight. After they're asleep.

Led by chariots, a dusty Athenian army approaches.

The prisoners kneel, their foreheads touching the bottom of the cart. Apo holds Palamon steady so he doesn't topple.

The king's chariot with Theseus and Hypolyta passes by.

Blister grins at the cart as he passes. Cane pointedly looks straight ahead. Emily looks, then twists around to focus with mingled compassion and curiosity on the prisoners.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- The foot soldiers march by.

-- Some widows drive carts with supplies.

-- A heard of goats is driven by two boys and a girl.

-- As dust settles on the cart, Apo helps Arcite restore Palamon to a prone position.

Reveal Emily, on horseback, watching, hidden from view. Suddenly she gallops off. Arcite and Palamon look up suddenly.

They watch her gallop into the distance.

EXT. CAMP ON THE ROAD TO ATHENS - NIGHT

Seated on a rock, Palamon is sketching Con's face with charcoal on a large flat rock as Con prepares dinner. Apo stands close by. On several other rocks, a number of Con's figurines are placed around the camp in their own little drama.

Palamon pauses in his work and picks up the figure of the medieval knight.

PALAMON

(to Con)

These are beautiful. The clothing is strange. Are they from another place or perhaps another time?

ARCITE
(getting up)
Nature calls.

Arcite moves a discreet distance from the camp and accidentally brushes the figurine of Saturn off its rock.

PALAMON
When I first awoke...

Urinating sound.

PALAMON
...they looked so alive, almost
like they were watching me.

Con looks pleased. The urinating sound stops.

PALAMON
(to Apo, about Con)
He doesn't say much, does he?

APO
Jealousy cost him his tongue.

While walking back to camp, Arcite steps (crunch) on the figurine of Saturn, breaking it in two. Apo hears the snap. Arcite picks it up and tries pitifully to fit it back together. Con spots the broken figure in Arcite's fumbling hands.

APO
But there's nothing wrong with his
vocal cords.

Con screams in anguish. Looking very guilty, Arcite breaks a stick from a branch of a small bush nearby.

PALAMON
(attempting to divert)
Con, could you take a look at this?

Con moves over to Palamon and reluctantly examines Palamon's charcoal sketch of himself (Con). He picks up a charcoal and adds a few touches, which opens Palamon's eyes to some new ideas.

Arcite, totally absorbed by the Saturn figurine he holds, wanders over to the flat portraiture rock and sits on it, facing a startled Palamon and Con, who has just filled his mouth with mead.

ARCITE

I could fix this if I had more
light.

He gets up, turns, and bends to the fire for better light. His rear shows a charcoal impression of Con's face. Con spews out his mead.

PALAMON

We're all just a reflection in
someone else's dream.

He laughs with Con.

Arcite labors hard to fix the broken piece. Con crosses to him and builds a crude pyramid out of kindling.

Then he takes the broken figurine out of Arcite's hands and lays it on top of the heap. Taking a flaming branch from the fire, he sets it ablaze -- a miniature funeral pyre. Arcite squats at the structure and studies it through the flames.

LATER

Palamon is being shaken awake by Arcite.

ARCITE

Shhh. They're asleep.

Palamon looks around and hastens out of his covers, wincing occasionally from the pain of half-healed wounds. Arcite hands him a bundle and helps him up. The two quietly help each other out of camp.

After just a dozen paces, they are facing Apo, who stands in their path, alert, staff casually held standing by his side. The cousins are stunned.

APO

I guess we'll have to bind you.

Con moves in with rope.

EXT. FOREST JUST OUTSIDE ATHENS - DAY

SUPER: "Two Weeks Later in a Forest Outside Athens"

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A great hart (large male stag) pulls up alertly from eating, then rears back on two hind legs, an arrow just missing underneath them and sticking into a tree. The hart drops down and twists its head as another arrow narrowly misses its neck.
- Off leaps the hart, dashing through the woods at a speed far greater than a horse, and demolishing brush and branches as it goes.
- Emily and Theseus converge on horseback and resheath their bows. Both are smiling.

THESEUS

Maybe next time.

EMILY

Maybe.

She spurs her black stallion in a dash away from Theseus, who grins and nudges his horse to follow.

EXT. THE WALL OF ATHENS - CONTINUOUS

Blister and Cane stand on a parapet. They watch Emily race by, past the main city gate. They look up the main road and spy the prison cart approaching from a distance.

BLISTER

Ma wants to talk to you.

Smoldering, Cane turns slowly.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Arcite and Palamon, hands bound behind them, walk with Apo and Con into the walled palace grounds proper. Palamon glances quickly at the wall and gate, making mental notes.

They walk across a large beautiful open garden and grassy area with a pond. Palamon stares at the black swan swimming in it.

APO

Once, the cook wanted to curry
favor from the King by catching
and cooking up the swan.

PALAMON

That swan?

Con nods his head.

APO

The pond's deeper than it looks.
He almost drowned.

Palamon and Arcite exchange glances.

INT. PALACE - CONTINUOUS

The four enter the imposing palace. SHINGLES meets the four just inside the palace entryway.

SHINGLES

This way to your "suite," your
royal majesties.

He grins. The four follow him with two henchmen, who carry a bundle of firewood and a net sack of food. They trudge up a ramp that circles up to the tower. Statues of the gods line the walls.

Arriving at a massive oak door, Shingles unlocks and opens it. To one side of it is a life-sized bust of Persephone.

SHINGLES

Our real prison sits at the edge
of Athens. It's filled with vermin
who steal and kill. We keep this
room nice for permanent "guests"
like yourselves.

(licking the statue's
cheek)

Persephone, Queen of the Dead.

Shingles smiles at his guests and gestures for them to enter.

INT. PRISON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The guards unbind the prisoners. They load food onto a table.
Overturned cots are put upright and blankets heaped on them.

Shingles stands next to the door watching the prisoners,
especially Palamon, who looks uncomfortable. The guards exit.

Apo taps the stone floor twice.

APO

This room is large enough to serve.

Palamon looks positively ill, much to Shingles' pleasure.

SHINGLES

Enjoy your stay, gents!

Shingles closes the door with a slam of finality.

Arcite looks at the ashen Palamon.

ARCITE

Con, help me get him to the window.

Con and Arcite help Palamon to the fresh air. Arcite studies him
thoughtfully for a beat as Palamon gets back his color looking
up to the sky. Then Arcite turns to Apo.

ARCITE

Why did they lock you up with us?

APO

We're your servants now.

Palamon looks down into the garden.

ARCITE

Until when?

Apo begins to tidy up.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- From the table where Apo and Arcite sit, Con brings Palamon some bread and a mug where he stands at the window.
- Bundled in blankets, Palamon and Arcite sit together on a cot, Palamon looking at the window, Arcite staring dully at the floor.
- Palamon, now with a three-days' growth of beard, stands at the window.

PALAMON

(looking out, in a
soft voice)

I see a lady.

Con peeks out from next to him, looks at Palamon then moves away.

PALAMON

Such beauty, I cannot find the
words...

ARCITE

That's a first.

PALAMON

...a lady - or a goddess.

ARCITE

Oh please, sweet Jove.

Arcite sighs and moves to the window to tease him. He looks out and his eyes show that he too is stricken.

EXT./INT. PALACE GARDEN/PRISON WINDOW - DAY

Reveal Emily pacing thoughtfully near the pond where the black swan circles.

PALAMON
(clutching the bars
with a rapt face)
Are you a goddess?

Emily picks a flower.

ARCITE
That Jove ever molded such grace.

Emily weaves the flower into a garland.

PALAMON
The garland she weaves seems
graced by her touch.

Emily examines the garland by holding it out and begins to hum a love song.

ARCITE
It would look wonderful on her
beautiful hair.

Emily places the garland on her head and begins to vocalize the song's refrain.

PALAMON
Oh.

ARCITE
You sing like a....

PALAMON
...a heavenly angel.

Emily strolls out of view. The cousins search for her in vain.

PALAMON
You are fairer than the Spring.

ARCITE

I must see you every day, my fair maiden, or I will die.

PALAMON

"Your" fair maiden? Are you joking?

ARCITE

I was never more serious. She is my Lady and I will serve her always.

PALAMON

She is my love!

ARCITE

You don't even know whether she's a lady or a goddess! How could she be your love?

PALAMON

I saw her first! We made a vow...no matter what!

ARCITE

We were boys!

PALAMON

...and you are duty bound as a chivalrous knight to help me win my love!

ARCITE

Why would I help you win the maiden who is my love? You forget, dear cousin, that all is fair in love and --

APO

The Queen's sister, Princess Emily, is beyond the reach of either of you.

The cousins are stunned.

ARCITE

What?!

PALAMON

Are you saying that my lady in the garden...

ARCITE

She's not your lady!

PALAMON

...is Princess Emily?

ARCITE

All the more reason to love her.

Palamon turns back to the window.

APO

He who would love a princess from behind bars is mad!

ARCITE

No, he who would choose not to love is mad.

Con glances at Apo, who looks angry. Arcite follows Palamon to the window and presses for a share of the view.

Palamon shoves him away. Arcite shoves back harder. Palamon begins to charge Arcite, who suddenly falls backwards.

Reveal Apo's staff between his legs. Arcite twists over, slams his foot onto Apo's staff, wrenching it from his hand, and stands up on it. The three face each other in tense silence.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- A tray of mugs appears in the midst of the three men.

-- Zoom in on the tray.

-- Pan up to Con's smiling face peering from behind the mugs.

Pull back to reveal:

INT. MEDIEVAL TAVERN - DAY

The Little Man serves mugs to the Nun and the Wife of Bath.

NUN

How can they both suddenly fall in
love like that?

WIFE OF BATH

Trust me dear, all it takes is a
good pair of legs --

THE FRANKLIN

But they're locked up.

SUMMONER

They're prisoners of Venus,
thanks to great Mars.

NUN

Emily doesn't even know.

MILLER

But they still have their manhood
(grips his crotch)
'cause they're safe behind bars!

The coarser male pilgrims guffaw. The Nun blushes.

KNIGHT

Emily became their refuge. Day by
day, Palamon and Arcite would
stand, side by side...

EXT. PALACE GARDEN - DAY

KNIGHT (VO)

...watching Emily when she would
take her morning walk in the
palace garden.

MONTAGE - DURING THE KNIGHT'S VO

- Emily paces in the garden, reading thoughtfully.
- Palamon and Arcite look out the window.
- Emily looks around as if someone is watching.
- Arcite practices with a small wood sword, attempting to ward off Apo's staff -- with painful results. Palamon practices dodging blows from Con unsuccessfully (ow).
- Con whittles. He looks up to see Palamon and Arcite at the window again.
- Palamon sketches the Palace Gate from floor to ceiling on the wall next to the prison door. Con corrects details.
- Emily feeds the black swan. Snow is on the ground. The now-bearded princes watch, following Emily's every move.
- Palamon sits on his bed carefully sketching and coloring a portrait of Emily on a parchment, glancing over at Arcite, who is fiddling with the handle of his wooden sword.

INT. PRISON - EARLY SPRING MORNING

Apo shakes the cots of the cousins to wake them.

PALAMON

What?

Con goes to nudge Apo, who stands apart, feeling the rising sun on his face.

APO

Con has finished his game of four
kings from India.

Con indicates a table with four chairs set up and a board with four sets of exquisitely carved figurine chess pieces.

Con sits at one of the places, smiling proudly and indicating that the cousins should be seated opposite each other.

PALAMON

Why would I want to play a game
with him?

Con mimes death and destruction in battle.

APO

You can do each other to death
over the chessboard!

The cousins sit. Palamon moves in for a close look.

Zoom in on Wife of Bath, Summoner and Knight figurines.

PALAMON

Hey, my face is on one of the
elephants.

ARCITE

Any elephant with your face on it
should apologize to its mother!

APO

Prince Arcite --

ARCITE

(attempting a
conciliatory gesture)
This one's got my face on it.

PALAMON

Which end?

Palamon moves a chess piece. Con moves. Arcite moves. Con looks
at Apo, then back at the empty chair.

Then Con has an idea -- he borrows Apo's staff, mimes a blind
walk to Apo's chair, tapping his way, sits, and moves a piece.
Palamon and Arcite can't help but break into a small laugh. Apo
grins from the other side of the room.

The three players move several times in speeded up sequence with
Con playing the blind man and his jaunty self alternately.

ARCITE
(interrupting the
game)
It's time for her walk.

Palamon and Arcite get up and move to the window. In a blinding series of moves, Con completes the game and flicks ALL of the kings down -- four-way checkmate!

EXT. PALACE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Emily paces deep in thought. She turns to find Pirothus standing before her.

EMILY
(warmly)
My Lord Pirothus, you're back!

PIROTHUS
Your Highness. I bear a gift.

He hands her a small Egyptian figurine of a black horse. Emily smiles.

EMILY
(slyly)
In Egypt again?

Pirothus smiles coyly. From the prison bars, Palamon and Arcite watch Emily gesture with animation to Pirothus.

ARCITE
It's Pirothus!

Emily and Pirothus stroll near the swan pond.

EMILY
What am I doing here. I walk, I
eat, I sleep, I hunt...well,
hunting's good. And Dee, my
attending lady - she tries to
dress me. I know how to dress.

PIROTHUS

You're a remarkable young woman...
(touching her cheek)
...and a great princess.

Cut to the cousins at the window.

PALAMON AND ARCITE

(howling mad at
Pirothus' touch)
Pirothus?!

Cut back to the garden.

PIROTHUS

Did you hear that?

Both Pirothus and Emily look around. Emily spots the prisoners at the barred window.

EMILY

The royal hostages. Didn't we tear
down the walls at Thebes?

PIROTHUS

Yes.

EMILY

Then why do we need hostages? Are
they really a threat?

INT. PALACE HALLWAY - DAY

Pirothus approaches the prison room. He is blocked by Shingles and two guards.

PIROTHUS

Let me see the prisoners.

SHINGLES

Sorry, my Lord, no visitors. Orders.

PIROTHUS

Whose orders?

SHINGLES

Blister's, my Lord.

PIROTHUS

Does the King know?

SHINGLES

Step this way, my Lord.

Pirothus peeks through the barred door window and sees the four prisoners engaged in various occupations. His expression turns grim.

INT. THE KING'S CHAMBER - DAY

In the King's favorite chamber, there are weapons mounted on the walls, but mostly the room is a place of comfort. Theseus sits with Hypolyta. An attendant appears.

ATTENDANT

Your Majesties? Lord Pirothus.

Enter Pirothus, exit attendant. Hypolyta and Theseus rise together. Hypolyta looks at the two awkward men.

HYPOLYTA

I have something to attend to. If you'll excuse me...

PIROTHUS

Your Highness.

She exits. Theseus and Pirothus look at each other tensely.

THESEUS

I wondered if I'd ever see you again.

PIROTHUS

I had some things to think over.

THESEUS

How long have you been back?

PIROTHUS

A couple of hours. I've seen
Emily. Theseus...

THESEUS

Yes?

PIROTHUS

The royal hostages --

THESEUS

What about them?

PIROTHUS

I went to see them.

THESEUS

Oh?

PIROTHUS

Yes, Prince Arcite --

THESEUS

Yes?

PIROTHUS

I don't think he's a threat.

THESEUS

No, probably not.

PIROTHUS

What about banishment?

(Theseus looks at him
sternly)

On pain of death.

THESEUS

Take care of it.

PIROTHUS

Thank you.

They share a smile. Pirothus starts to leave, but stops.

PIROTHUS

Did you know Apo and Con are
locked up with them?

THESEUS

What?!

PIROTHUS

Courtesy of Blister and Cane.

THESEUS

God dammit! What the hell am I
going to do with those two?

INT. THE KING'S ROYAL STABLES - DAY

The black stallion paws the ground testily in his stall. Blister
and Cane shovel horse pucky.

BLISTER

Until when?!

CANE

Until we're smarter, he said.

BLISTER

When the hell is that?

INT. PRISON ROOM - DAY

Arcite and Palamon are practicing martial arts with Apo and Con.
Arcite is becoming competent enough to parry Apo's blows, and
Palamon can often escape Con's broom "sword" thrusts. The prison
door opens. Shingles shows his head around it. The four halt.

SHINGLES

Con!

Con looks around as if Shingles must mean someone else, then
gives the broom over to Apo and exits, with the three remaining
prisoners looking perplexed.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE PRISON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SHINGLES

The Queen wants you.

(He stops Con with his
hand, moving it to Con's
neck threateningly.)

I have a little box where I saved
your tongue.

Shingles releases him. Wide-eyed and fearful, Con departs
quickly down the hall.

INT. PRISON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Apo is practicing some moves with his staff. Arcite and Palamon
are at the window. The prison door opens. Shingles looks around
the edge of the door.

SHINGLES

Prince Arcite?! Apo! Come with me.

Palamon and Arcite look at each other, neither knowing if
they'll ever see each other again or what to say either way.

SHINGLES

Your honors?!

Apo and Arcite exit.

INT. PALACE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Pirothus stands with two guards who carry travel bundles. Arcite
is shocked and excited to see him.

ARCITE

Pirothus!

PIROTHUS

Dear Jove, I hardly recognize you.

Shingles looks after the retreating five with suspicion.
Pirothus looks at the guards, then Arcite and Apo.

ARCITE

What's going on?

PIROTHUS

I talked to Theseus. You're being banished from Athens. If you ever return, that day will be your last. Apo will escort you to Thebes. You have just an hour to flee the city.

ARCITE

What? What about Palamon?

PIROTHUS

He stays.

Pirothus walks away.

ARCITE

Pirothus!

APO

(pulling Arcite away)

Your highness --

ARCITE

I can't leave Emily...

The guards draw their swords.

EXT. PALACE GARDEN - DAY

Cut to Palamon watching from the window as Arcite, Apo, and the two guards with bundles cross the garden. The black swan swims peacefully on the pond.

Arcite stops and looks up at the prison window.

ARCITE

You have the advantage now.

INT. PRISON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

PALAMON

(looking down at Arcite)

Nothing stands between you and
Emily now.

Palamon turns, crosses to the chess set, sits and lowers his head to study the pieces. His face contorts and he sweeps the pieces from the board, leaving his distraught face alone.

EXT. GATES OF ATHENS - CONTINUOUS

Arcite and Apo are at the gates. Several guards are present. A second line of citizens gain admittance adjacent to them.

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS

Your highness.

ARCITE

You know who I am?

CAPTAIN

Everyone knows who you are. And
the conditions of your banishment.

Arcite and Apo exit on foot with their bundles.

INT. PRISON ROOM - DAY

Palamon broods, sitting on his bed. Con pulls out an exquisite figurine of Emily. A flicker of interest from Palamon.

Con's eyes wander to the chess table and pieces scattered on the floor, then back to Palamon, who looks away, apathetic. Con crosses to Palamon and wraps the prince's hand around the figurine of Emily. Palamon carefully puts it on the window sill and turns away from it -- it isn't really Emily.

EXT. GATES OF ATHENS - DAY

Two burly guards watch people entering the gate. They let pass a disguised Apo, with his hair completely covering his blind eyes. Reveal a clean-shaven Arcite with patches of bald scalp alternating with tufts of hair sticking in every direction.

FIRST GUARD

Love your hair.

Apo smiles proudly. Arcite growls.

INT./EXT. PRISON ROOM/PALACE GARDEN - DAY

Palamon watches Emily wandering in the garden and reading.

Concern and irritation are on Emily's face as she reads certain passages that displease her.

EMILY

No, no, no! What can you be thinking?! Don't encourage him!

INT. EMILY'S WING OF PALACE - DAY

LADY DEE speaks to a flock of servants. Arcite and Apo wait patiently for her attention.

DEE

You all know how important today's birthday is for our Lady. Make her proud of you!

The servants scatter with earnest industry. Dee sees that two remain. She looks hard at them.

DEE

What do you want?!

ARCITE

My Lady, we seek employment in Princess Emily's house.

Recognizing Apo, Dee moves to him.

DEE

And so I employ you today and
tomorrow you disappear.

ARCITE

Never.

Her eyes linger on Apo, who hangs his head.

A magnificent life-sized statue of the God Saturn seems to float into the room. At its base, two sculpted fountain dogs with Blister's and Cane's faces, both with one leg lifted, pee on the legs of Saturn.

DEE

Con?!

The statue stops, and Con peers just above the Blister dog with a smile. Con and Arcite spot each other and freeze.

DEE

Put the Saturn over there, on that
pedestal, next to your "Vulcan."
Thank you, Master Con.

She turns away. Con exits with a "you're both mad" glance at Arcite and Apo.

Emily enters, so deeply engrossed in the parchment that she bumps into a pedestal, which sets a vase to falling -- caught and replaced by Arcite. She drapes her cloak over Saturn's arm without looking. Arcite looks lovestruck.

DEE

The present from your sister is
here, my Lady.

(indicating Con's
statue of Saturn)

EMILY

Listen to this: "Lady Dorigen
raised the dagger to her breast --"
She's going to take her own life
to preserve her honor!

DEE

Oh!

Arcite stands up.

ARCITE

She doesn't, though.

EMILY

What?

Dee's eyes widen in alarm.

ARCITE

I've read that tale. Aurelius
couldn't help falling madly in
love with Dorigen. He almost died
of it.

EMILY

Dorigen is married!

ARCITE

Do you mean she couldn't love two
men at once?

Apo and Dee suddenly inhale.

EMILY

I'm going for a ride.

She turns to walk away. Dee puts the parchment next to a vase.

DEE

My Lady, the guests are waiting...

EMILY

I didn't invite them. Let them
wait.

She pulls away the cloak, which snags on Saturn's arm. As Emily and Lady Dee exit, the statue begins to topple. Arcite nudges Apo; they catch it just in time.

Dee reappears. Surprised, Arcite straightens up suddenly, abandoning Apo. Apo loses his grip on the Saturn. It topples and crashes, breaking into pieces and leaving the dogs peeing on each other. Arcite and Dee looked stunned, while Apo cringes.

DEE

Not the Saturn. The Queen will
kill me!

APO

I'll fix it. You need to be at the
party.

DEE

(to Arcite)

You. Tend the horses of the
guests.

ARCITE

My Lady.

(He exits.)

APO

Dee?

DEE

You left me.

APO

I couldn't face you. After I was
blinded --

She takes his hand and moves it over her face.

DEE

Oh, I have so missed your touch.

EXT. PALACE GARDEN - LATER

Arcite is shoveling horse pucky. He winces from the smell just as Emily rides up and dismounts from her black stallion.

EMILY
(handing him the
reins, smiling)
Strangers make him nervous.

She walks away.

INT. PRISON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Palamon watches the party from the window. Con is sweeping up.

PALAMON
If only I had a gift. I could
write her a letter. But how -- you
could take it to her.

Palamon takes up a quill and begins to write.

PALAMON
"When Venus, Mars, and Jove do
sit, and Vulcan, Apollo, and Pluto
match wit --"

Con utters a noise of disapproval. Palamon crumples up the parchment and starts a new one.

EXT. PALACE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Dee moves among the guests looking for Hypolyta.

INT. PRISON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

PALAMON
"...and gathering many a flower
white and red, to weave a delicate
garland for your head --"

Con is impressed.

PALAMON

"-- and like a heavenly angel's is
your song..."

Con sniffs tearfully. Palamon seeks out his portrait of Emily
and finishes copying the text onto it.

PALAMON

(completing it)

"Always yours, forever your
servant..."

(to himself)

"...Philostrates."

He rolls up the scroll. Con kneels like a knight about to be
christened, hands out in supplication to receive the sacred holy
grail. Palamon places it in his hands. Con bangs on the door.

The lock turns. On the table, Palamon sees both the empty wine
jug and Con's herbal pouch. The door opens and Shingles peers
in.

SHINGLES

You knocked, your excellency?

PALAMON

(over loud)

Con! You forgot the wine jug!

Con looks confused.

SHINGLES

What? Wine? You'll get a share for
me an' your pals?

PALAMON

(to Con)

Well, press on, man!

Con grabs the jug forcefully and begins to stalk out.

PALAMON

Oh for the sake of Zeus. Don't
forget your pouch.

Con looks at his pouch. Then his bright eyes turn to Shingles. He
smiles, mimes drinking from a mug, and points to Shingles.

SHINGLES

Wine for me?! Yeah!

Con exits with jug, scroll, and pouch in hand, throwing a
conspiratorial glance at Palamon.

The instant the door closes, Palamon quickly begins to throw a
few things together in a small bundle.

EXT. PALACE GARDEN - DAY

Tables are laden with fresh fruits and delicacies. Musicians
play, including a harpist (played by the Friar). Great Lords and
Ladies mill about, vying for a position close to Hypolyta or
Theseus or the birthday girl, Emily.

HYPOLYTA

(to GAYLORDIUS)

It just took him a week to carve
the Saturn for Emily. Let me show
you.

GAYLORDIUS

Oh, I'm beside myself with
excitement!

DEE

(in a panic)

My Lady --

HYPOLYTA

(registering Dee's
alarm)

It must still be in its crate.
Have you tried the honeyed goat
tray, my Lord --

Out of nowhere, Apo inserts his tray of hors d'oeuvres in front of Gaylordius, an obsequious smile on his face.

Theseus walks with Pirothus within Arcite's hearing.

THESEUS

...because there may be no other
way to end all the conflict in
Greece.

PIROTHUS

But marriage?

In another part of the garden Emily is pulled aside by Dee.

DEE

My Lady, the suitors are lined up
with their presents.

EMILY

Oh dear Jove --

Emily allows Dee to lead her to "death by boredom."

Con has reached the party, letter-gift in hand. He looks up and signals Palamon, who is watching from his lofty barred window. Pirothus sees the signal and spots the look.

PIROTHUS

(to Theseus, who is
swamped with guests)
Pardon me, my Lord.

Pirothus hastens to intercept Con but is blocked.

APO

An appetizer, my Lord.

PIROTHUS

(taking a morsel)
You look familiar.

APO

I can't say I've seen you before,
my Lord.

From the prison window, Palamon spots Arcite tending the horses.

PALAMON

That dog.

Emily is bored near to screaming. Gaylordius presents her a small gadget on a cushion, with a line of impatient contenders behind him.

Emily looks down the line to see Con, looking around nervously, standing at its end, holding a scroll tied with a ribbon.

Hypolyta has also spotted Con standing in line and separates herself from vying ladies to approach him.

Con has made urgent eye contact with Emily but needs to escape Hypolyta and ducks into the crowd.

Two well-groomed boys and a girl, MARY, (played by Paul, Allen, and Little Emily) are playing next to a tray of drinks near the line of suitors, and tip it into a massive spill and crash.

DEE

Oh!

The boys run, but Mary freezes. She sees Emily who mouths "Run!" and winks.

Mary runs around to the back of the table where Emily stands and ducks under. There she meets up with Con. He points to the scroll and gives her a conspiratorial wink.

Arcite stalks to the back of a horse with a bucket. He successfully catches a horse pucky expulsion.

ARCITE

Ha!

Just then a horse from his other side poops on his tunic.

Peeking out from under the table, Mary tugs on Emily's hem until Emily notices her with a smile. Just then Pirothus arrives.

EMILY

Ah, my Lord Pirothus.

Under the table, Con registers alarm. He makes a break for it and dashes into the crowd of dancers, briskly pursued by Pirothus.

PIROTHUS

Hey!

Emily begins to follow but has the notion that what Con is carrying is for her. She chooses an unpopulated patch of ground and heads for it.

Con sticks the letter in the sash of an unsuspecting whirling dancer and shows his empty hands to Pirothus, who vainly chases the dancer. Palamon goes limp again at the prison window bars.

Arcite plucks the letter from the dancer's belt. A horse bumps him. In that moment of distraction, Con pops up and snatches it out of his hand. Hope returns to Palamon.

Con makes a headlong dash to Emily, when the letter is plucked from his hand.

HYPOLYTA

What's this? A love letter, no
doubt, for my baby sister.

Con halts empty-handed. Palamon freezes. The note is gently plucked from Hypolyta's hand by Pirothus.

PALAMON

No!

PIROTHUS

Pardon me, your majesty, but I
believe this letter --

Apo spills a tray of drinks on Pirothus, who instinctively pulls back the letter, which is plucked out of his hand by Con.

PALAMON

Yes!

APO

My Lord, forgive my clumsiness.

Theseus approaches the birthday girl.

THESEUS

Happy Birthday, Emily!

Con has managed to reach Theseus with Hypolyta and Pirothus hot on his tail. He sticks the letter in the back of the King's sash. Theseus feels it and turns suddenly, just as Hypolyta and Pirothus reach Con.

THESEUS

Ah, Con --

Emily plucks the letter, causing Theseus to abruptly turn back to her. The letter is gone.

THESEUS

What?

EMILY

Perhaps Con could show you the present he gave me.

Apo begins an extraordinary coughing fit.

PIROTHUS

Clumsy fellow. I wish he'd watch where he's going!

EMILY

I'm feeling a little light-headed.
May I take my leave briefly?

THESEUS

Of course, Emily.

The four drift back into the party with Con lingering a little.

Emily turns to find young Mary at her side watching her. Emily drops to Mary's eye level.

EMILY

Do you ever feel like hiding -
just to escape everyone looking at
you?

MARY

Yup.

Mary turns to see the boys peeking from behind bushes. She runs away giggling with them following. Emily watches them, then begins to walk toward the pond, some distance from the main party group.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Palamon watches from his window, hope building inside him.
- Emily slows and stops. Feeling that someone is watching her, she turns and scans the party.
- Arcite is suddenly preoccupied with the horses.
- Emily glances at the prison bars high up and sees a bearded prisoner.
- Palamon stares back at her, completely still.
- Emily turns back to her walk. On reaching the pond, she pulls the letter from a hidden fold in her dress, examines it closely, and opens it.
- The black swan circles gracefully on the pond.
- Emily sees her portrait and gasps.

EMILY

Who painted this?

She reads the poetry. She walks briskly beside the pond. Palamon watches, feeling he's about to explode.

EMILY

"Forever yours, Philostrates."

She reads it again, pacing ever more quickly on the bank, which is beginning to crumble in one spot.

EMILY

Philostrates.

She glows. Suddenly, the bank gives way. Emily slips and falls into the pond, letting go of the letter, which drifts into the bushes.

Palamon sees what has happened, horrified. He throws himself against the bars as if he could fly.

PALAMON

Save her, someone!

The party grinds merrily on, unaware. Palamon emits a piercing eagle's cry. Arcite turns upon hearing the cry, looks up at the bars, and sees Palamon pointing towards the pond.

Hypolyta notices the groom's panicked gaze and follows it. Together they spy Emily's plight in the distance.

HYPOLYTA

Theseus, Emily -- ! She can't swim!

Arcite mounts the black stallion, who rears mightily.

ARCITE

Not now! Save your mistress.

The stallion races to the pond. A party of men led by Theseus run to the pond. The stallion passes them and stops abruptly, flipping Arcite head over heels into the pond. He enters feet first and searches desperately under water.

There she is looking at him, panic on her face. He hooks his arm under one of hers and pulls mightily to the surface with the other.

A bevy of hands reach to pull them out. Emily coughs up water. Arcite is helped up by the King himself. Arcite makes a motion as if to go to Emily. Theseus stops him.

THESEUS

She's in good hands.

Hypolyta and Dee help Emily away through the stunned party crowd that parts before them.

THESEUS

I don't remember you. What's your name?

ARCITE

Ar -- Philostrates, your majesty.

Emily stops and turns with wide eyes to look upon Arcite, who is frozen by the look.

DEE

Come away, Lady.

HYPOLYTA

Emily --

Theseus watches a shocked and drenched Emily allowing herself to be guided away by the women. The crowd begins to murmur. Pirothus recognizes Arcite, who sees his look. Theseus glances from man to man, slightly confused.

THESEUS

Well, Pirothus, how shall we reward our young hero?!

PIROTHUS

Your majesty --

Arcite is alarmed but keeps quiet.

THESEUS

(to Arcite)

Other than Princess Emily, no one has ever been able to ride that damned stallion. You'll be head groom of Our stables. Who cut your hair?

Theseus smiles broadly at his own magnanimity and cleverness.

ARCITE

Your majesty --

PIROTHUS

(staving off disaster)

What an honor, young
"Philostrates."

ARCITE

Thank you, your majesty.

THESEUS

We all thank you, young man.

The crowd claps for an embarrassed Arcite. Pull back to the view as seen through the bars from just behind Palamon.

INT. PRISON ROOM - NIGHT

Light from the door window casts striped shadows on a crouched Palamon, who waits with his bundle in hand. The guards are having a clink party and singing. Palamon hears:

SHINGLES (OS)

Altogether now, boys, a toast to
Master Con!

GUARDS

To Master Con!

In quick sequence, the sounds of three bodies dropping to the ground with smashed jug sounds. Palamon counts on his fingers and whispers "One, two, three"... He's confused.

SHINGLES (OS)

(drunkenly)

Can't hold their liquor!

The sound of a heavy collapse and smash.

PALAMON

Four!

He looks out the door peep hole and sees Con's face smiling back at him.

The two tiptoe past the happily snoozing Shingles and guards.

INT. KING'S BED CHAMBER - NIGHT

An aide with a torch stands before the King's bed. Theseus and Hypolyta are awake. Theseus gets out of bed quickly.

THESEUS

Fetch Lord Pirothus. Get my horse.

Hypolyta helps Theseus into his tunic and he straps on his great sword. Hypolyta throws on a cloak and follows.

INT. STABLES - CONTINUOUS

The aide pounds on the door. A sleepy Arcite opens it with Blister and Cane standing in night clothes behind him, fully alert.

AIDE

The King and his staff require
their mounts. Now!

Arcite nods to Blister and Cane, who quickly prepare the mounts.

ARCITE

What's going on?

AIDE

Escaped prisoner. The Theban.

ARCITE

I need to borrow this --

Arcite pulls the aide's sword, and exits running.

Con is outside in the garden, pulling a night-clothed Emily.

EMILY

Con, where are you taking me?!

Suddenly, Emily is confronted with a scraggly madman with a sword. Con backs away, smiling.

PALAMON

Emily.

She looks astonished and confused but unafraid. The footsteps of an approaching runner are heard. Palamon looks to the left just in time to see Arcite's running charge, which knocks him off his feet.

Arcite pulls his sword. Grabbing his own sword, Palamon scrambles to his feet, and the two commence a vicious fight. After a miss by Arcite, Palamon slices into his exposed rib.

EMILY

Philostrates!

Palamon turns to Emily, surprising her again. Arcite takes advantage of the confusion and cuts Palamon's thigh.

The King, Queen, Pirothus, and a retinue of soldiers gallop up. The fighting cousins ignore them. Leading Apo by the hand, Lady Dee is running to the scene and, letting go of Apo, looks to her lady. The royals and their escort dismount.

THESEUS

(pulling his sword)

Hold! Or by mighty Mars the Red,
the next man who strikes a blow
shall die!

(then to Arcite)

We'll take charge of the prisoner.
Well done, Philostrates.

PALAMON

Your majesty, I didn't realize he
was still your prisoner.

THESEUS

What?

ARCITE

I'm not his prisoner.

THESEUS
Of course not, Philostrates.

PALAMON
He's not Philostrates!

PIROTHUS
Your majesty, I believe you
address Prince Arcite!

Theseus turns around to Pirothus, then back to the cousins.

THESEUS
Princes Arcite and Palamon?

Arcite and Palamon kneel.

EMILY
Then who is Philostrates?

ARCITE AND PALAMON
I am!

THESEUS
What in the name of Saturn --

HYPOLYTA
No, not Saturn this time. Isn't it
obvious?

THESEUS
No, it's not obvious. If Phil,
Pal, Ar - If this one
(indicating Arcite)
whom I banished...

Palamon looks caught off guard.

THESEUS
...came back to rescue that one,
then why -- why in the name of
Jove are you fighting?

HYPOLYTA
Not Jove my love - Venus.

Both cousins turn and face Emily.

THESEUS

(seeing all at once)

No, by God --

PALAMON

When my eyes first were touched by
your beauty...

ARCITE

That first day when I saw you...

PALAMON

...in May, the flowers, red and
white...

ARCITE

...you were in the garden. And I...

PALAMON

...and your tenderness with the
swan...

PIROTHUS

(rolling his eyes)

"With the swan" -- my God!

ARCITE

...I knew my heart would break if...

PALAMON

...I could hardly breathe except
when you were...

ARCITE

...I couldn't leave Athens when my
lady remained...

PALAMON

"Your" lady! I saw her first!

ARCITE

You thought she was a goddess!

Palamon turns to Emily suddenly embarrassed. She inhales sharply, touched. Arcite realizes his mistake.

ARCITE

My love for you is as real as the
blood that runs through my veins
and that I have shed for you here.
The sound of your voice...

THESEUS

Hey! Are you listening to me? I
banished you.

(looking to Pirothus)

What conditions did I give?

PIROTHUS

(reluctantly)

"On pain of death."

THESEUS

(turning to Arcite)

On pain of death!

EMILY

(to Arcite)

Who are you?

PALAMON

Emily!

EMILY

(to Palamon)

And who are you?

ARCITE

My Lady, I am your --

PALAMON AND ARCITE

(together)

Philostrates!

PALAMON

That's my name!

THESEUS

I don't care what your name is!
You broke out of my prison!

PALAMON

(standing up)

My Lord, I know I deserve to die.

THESEUS

Yes! Now we're talking!

PALAMON

But kill him first!

Arcite stands up, too.

THESEUS

Down!

The cousins drop to their knees. Theseus swings his blade up,
but now Hypolyta stands in front of him.

HYPOLYTA

My Lord, a word?

Theseus holds a beat, grabs Pirothus' hand, and thrusts his
sword into it.

THESEUS

Hold this.

Pirothus holds the sword up. Theseus steps aside to converse
with Hypolyta.

HYPOLYTA

These are men of great estate
whose only "crimes" were loyalty
to their king and love for Emily.

THESEUS

(in a low insistent
voice)

They defied me. What would you have
me do?! Throw Emily at them? Fine.

(retrieving his sword
from Pirothus and
turning to Emily)

Pick one.

EMILY

What?!

Hypolyta rolls her eyes.

THESEUS

(reasonably)

You pick one and I'll kill the
other.

Emily gives her brother-in-law a look, then turns with
exasperation to:

HYPOLYTA

(stepping in again and
taking the King aside)

You know what it's like to be in
love.

Emily hesitates, then steps towards Arcite.

EMILY

You saved my life. And the letter
you wrote...

Palamon reaches for and fumbles with a folded parchment he keeps
next to his heart.

EMILY

...the poetry and the portrait you
drew of me...

PALAMON

Each morning when first I awake
I remember that day
when I first beheld you
in that most perfect May.

EMILY

(surprised)

What?

ARCITE

I didn't write the letter.

Emily looks in confusion at Arcite, then Palamon.

THESEUS

Choose.

EMILY

I can't --

THESEUS

(to his soldiers)

The scraggly one.

Two soldiers push Palamon's head forward into an execution position. Theseus readies his sword.

HYPOLYTA

My Lord --

PIROTHUS

Theseus --

The King turns in anger to Pirothus.

THESEUS

Would you rather I executed your
friend?!

PIROTHUS

I would rather see them fight for
Emily's hand.

Theseus sees Emily looking with a deep concern at the princes.

THESEUS
(to himself, slowly
lowering his sword)
Fie on a man who would show no
mercy.

The party of folk wait with bated breath on the King, who begins to form a plan. Emily looks fearful and hopeful.

Theseus turns to the cousins.

THESEUS
Swear to me that you will never
wage war on me. Swear to be my
loyal friend in every way.

Theseus holds out his sword. Without hesitation, the cousins place their hands on the sword.

PALAMON AND ARCITE
This I swear.

Theseus withdraws his sword.

THESEUS
I do forgive your trespasses full
and fair.

The King motions the pair to rise.

THESEUS
This then is Our Will. We give you
one year and one day to gather,
each of you, four and twenty of
the greatest warriors that can be
found to help you fight in mortal
combat, here where it all began.
(turning to Emily)
For love...
(then turning back to
the princes)
...and for chivalry. And he who
puts his foe to death shall have
Emily for his wife.

Emily looks in confusion at each of the excited cousins. Cheers and clapping from the assembled folk.

INT. MEDIEVAL TAVERN - DAY

The pilgrims are cheering and congratulating each other. Every face is filled with delight, drinks go up, Allen and Paul are dancing with Little Emily holding hands in a circle. The Miller plays a wild jig on his bagpipe, aided by the Friar's harp.

Watching the antics, the knight smiles sadly. Waiting until the commotion drops to a murmur --

KNIGHT

Arcite and Palamon sent hundreds
of homing pigeons...

EXT. ATHENS - DAY

Athenian pigeon handlers release a flock of pigeons into the air.

KNIGHT (VO)

... to every town and city known
to Greeks.

SERIES OF SHOTS AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS

-- SUPER: "Akhetaton, Egypt"

Dozens of Egyptian scribes are copying the message a reader is reciting.

-- One of the Egyptian scribes directs the release of hundreds of pigeons. A black warrior watches.

-- SUPER: "The Balkans"

A holy man reads the message. He selects a pigeon from a cage and repacks the message onto another pigeon's leg. He throws the pigeon into the air.

-- SUPER: "Anyang, China"

A CHINESE WARRIOR straps up his horse and pack. A servant curls up the message and puts the pigeon into a cage.

-- SUPER: "Gobi Desert"

At an oasis with a shack and pigeon cages, a CARAVAN WARRIOR reads the small note and then takes another pigeon, which he throws up into the air. He checks his sword, mounts his horse, and splits off from the caravan at a gallop.

EXT. FOREST NEAR ATHENS - DAY

KNIGHT (VO)

Theseus commanded that his forest
be used to build a great arena.

Beginning with one and multiplying into hundreds, peasants are rhythmically cutting down the trees. A bark-pattern suggests the face of Diana, in a tree about to be cut. Pull back to reveal Theseus.

THESEUS

(touching the tree)

Leave this one standing -- in
honor of Diana.

INT. TAVERN IN INDIA - DAY

KNIGHT (VO)

Arcite traveled as far as India in
pursuit of the legendary King
Emetrius.

The Caravan Warrior throws a dagger at Apo, who flicks it up and to the side with his staff. It is caught by the Chinese Warrior.

ARCITE

(pointing to the
Chinese Warrior)

Welcome.

Two beggars sit close by. One is large and buffed. He watches everything. The other is small and skinny, and his blind blue eyes are focused up. Each eats from a small bowl of porridge.

APO

Take both of them.

Arcite gestures to the last two warriors to join him to the side.

ARCITE

That's it. Let's go.

APO

No. There's one more.

Apo begins to sweat. The large beggar stands up and drops his bowl. Before it hits the ground, he begins pushing the tables on both sides of the aisle leading to Apo, so they crash domino-effect into other tables, creating a riotous din.

Apo is overwhelmed by the noise. Arcite pulls his sword and moves to block the large beggar's path. The beggar stops suddenly and bows. Arcite freezes, sword at the ready. The silence is painful.

APO

Prince Arcite...

Arcite turns to look. Reveal Apo's staff hand empty and open.

APO

I believe I have the honor...

Reveal Apo's open hand receiving his staff back.

APO

...of introducing his majesty...

Reveal the face of the smaller "beggar" with blue eyes looking up at Apo as he slowly withdraws his hand from Apo's staff. Arcite pulls back and lowers his sword.

APO

...KING EMETRIUS.

The beggar-king smiles slightly.

Arcite looks back to the larger "beggar," whose forehead now touches the ground, and then back to King Emetrius, who has turned and is facing him.

ARCITE

We are deeply honored, your
Majesty.

He bows his head in a slight princely incline. The two Asian warriors look at each other with wonder, then drop to their knees in honor of the prince and king. Measuring Arcite, Emetrius likes what he finds. He pulls a small pigeon scroll from a fold and scans it.

EMETRIUS

It says here --"for chivalry"?!

ARCITE

Yes, your highness.

EXT. ATHENS - DAY

Stonemasons are fitting marble blocks together. Pirothus is directing the work and poring over plans with Theseus.

THESEUS

When Diana's temple is finished at
this end, put the temple of Mars
on this side of the arena and
Venus over there.

Theseus departs.

PIROTHUS

(calling after)

There's just six months left.

(loudly)

The pyramids took centuries.

(shouting)

And they still aren't finished!

EXT. NORTHERN EUROPE - DAY

KNIGHT (VO)

Palamon, Con, and their carefully
chosen band of warriors had
reached the bitter cold steppes of
the north in search of the great
warrior-king Lycergius.

Mounted, Palamon's men converge on a large barbarian-looking man
covered with furs and massive armor on a quick trot to somewhere.

PALAMON

Your Majesty, I'm Prince Palamon.

KING LYCERGIUS

(without slackening
pace)

I've heard of your quest. You do
this for love?

PALAMON

Will you join us, your Majesty?

LYCERGIUS

I have something else to attend
to. For love.

Lycergius redirects his horse away from Palamon, who halts,
disappointed.

SERIES OF SHOTS BETWEEN NORTHERN EUROPE AND ASIA

-- Arcite and Emetrius on horseback in a dripping jungle. Apo
brings up the rear, his horse led by a warrior.

-- Palamon, Con, and company travel on horseback on cold, stony
bare ground with patches of snow.

EXT. NORTHERN EUROPE - DAY

Palamon practices with Con, lightning-quick evasive tactics.
Others are practicing in groups of three to create unusual
dynamics. Palamon looks worried and stops.

PALAMON
If only King Lycergius...

A warrior approaches.

WARRIOR
Your Highness, a message arrived
at the local village for you.

He hands Palamon a scroll, bows and exits. Palamon unfurls it with concern and then his face transforms with delight.

PALAMON
It's from Emily!

SERIES OF SHOTS IN GREECE

- Theseus inspects a statue of a black stallion being chiseled out of black marble in the Temple of the God Mars.
- He paces outside the Goddess Diana's Temple, surveying the workers carving leaves on the Doric columns.
- Inside the Temple of the Goddess Venus, he watches artists painting various love scenes on the walls, noticing an especially beautiful love scene on a couch.

INT. ATHENS PALACE GARDEN - DAY

Emily paces furiously back and forth in front of the pond. Lady Dee is engrossed in the Dorigen parchment, oblivious.

DEE
My Lady, do you think Dorigen
loved them both?

Emily looks daggers at Dee.

DEE
I should check on supper, my
Lady...

Dee exits. Emily looks up at the barred prison window of the palace. She angrily picks up a stone near the pond.

EMILY

How dare you...

She flings the stone to the window, where it hits the right bar, ricochets to the left, then out and down the palace wall.

EMILY

...fight over me...

She picks up another stone and flings it.

EMILY

...like two dogs fighting over a bone!

The stone hits the left bar and splits.

EMILY

Why don't they write me?

Reveal Pirothus standing close by.

EMILY

What is he like?

PIROTHUS

Arcite?

EMILY

Arcite reveals himself. What about Palamon?

PIROTHUS

Well, I hardly knew him, but Arcite spoke of him as being gracious and kind --

EMILY

I wonder what his women were like...

PIROTHUS

I don't think he had any.

EMILY

(in alarm)

Why not? What's wrong with him?

PIROTHUS

Palamon strikes me as one of those
men who only love once. Not
uncommon really, for a poet.

EMILY

How would you know?

PIROTHUS

You tell me.

He reveals a ribbon-tied scroll.

EMILY

From Palamon?

PIROTHUS

It just arrived.

Emily takes it eagerly, to the amusement of Pirothus.

EXT. ATHENS - DAY

Artisans are being directed by Pirothus.

PIROTHUS

Finish it. Work through the night.
Hire anyone you need.

Pirothus exits. The worried craftsmen refocus their effort.

CRAFTSMAN (played by the Reeve)

(shouting)

There is no one else!

Pull back to reveal a two-year old pounding away with a hammer.
The child looks up and smiles.

INT. KING'S CHAMBER - DAWN

The sun is beginning to rise. Ram's horns are being blown throughout the city. A sleepy King turns towards his Queen.

THESEUS

They're back.

HYPOLYTA

I love weddings.

THESEUS

Yes, but we can only have one groom.

(with relish)

First, the fight!

EXT. ATHENS - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Crowds line the streets cheering on a chariot with four magnificent stallions pulling King Emetrius, who holds the reins. Arcite rides next to him. Behind them are 24 mounted warriors, each with highly individual garb and armor.
- Palamon and Con lead 23 gallant warriors on a street that converges at the palace gates.
- Theseus the King, Hypolyta the Queen, and Pirothus with an entourage await the groups at the palace gates.
- Closeup of four mean-looking bulls harnessed together.
- Palamon's group arrives at the palace gates to cheers.
- Tame leopards dart around the legs of the bulls that are straining to pull something large.
- Arcite and Emetrius arrive at the gate to cheers.
- Arcite and Palamon look to Theseus.

THESEUS

Welcome!

The crowd cheers, but then the horses become restless. Some are shying violently. The crowd's noise diminishes to a hush.

Pull back to reveal Emetrius and his skittish horses facing the stopped bulls, which are pulling a heavy gold chariot carrying an extravagantly dressed Lycergius.

Palamon beams with relief. Lycergius nods to him.

Emetrius and Lycergius drop simultaneously from their chariots and race to each other, swords drawn, alarming the crowd. They clash their swords once overhead and hold. Then Lycergius sticks his sword into the ground, followed quickly by Emetrius.

The two kings embrace. The Queen, relieved, walks down to them. They kneel before her. Hidden from view, Emily and Lady Dee watch. Hypolyta extends her hands. The kings each take one and kiss it.

HYPOLYTA

Please rise.

The crowd cheers. Then Lycergius and Emetrius rise and return to the sides of Palamon and Arcite, respectively. Hypolyta whips back up to Theseus.

THESEUS

Pirothus, Lycergius, Emetrius -
any others I should know about?

HYPOLYTA

What's a girl to do?

Theseus grabs Hypolyta and, while holding her in a lean, kisses her passionately. The crowd goes wild.

The crowd and royal guests intermingle.

KNIGHT (VO)

King Theseus feasted them - knights
and kings, "of chivalry the flower,"
and then sent all to rest for the
great contest.

INT. KING'S BED CHAMBER - NIGHT

Theseus sits in massive kingly garb at the edge of his bed. Hypolyta unstraps his breast plate. He drops it on the ground. Still dressed, he collapses back onto the bed, eyes closed. Hypolyta, in her lovely negligee, lies down, pulls a silk sheet over herself, and turns towards Theseus.

HYPOLYTA

(stroking his chest)

You know, it's really a shame so many beautiful men have to die.

(turns over and
closes her eyes.)

Goodnight.

Theseus' eyes open.

SERIES OF SHOTS AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS

- Emily is in bed awake. She pulls off her sheets and sits up.
- Arcite gets out of bed and begins to dress.
- Palamon enters the Palace Hall and pulls a torch from the wall.
- Arcite approaches the great iron doors of the Temple of the God Mars, which are well lit by two large flaming torches on both sides. He pulls mightily on the doors. They swing out with a loud iron creaking. He enters.
- Palamon moves through the Temple of the Goddess Venus, glancing at the amorous frescoes on each side that are uplit by hundreds of small flaming bowls. From a stone chair set high and to the side, Theseus watches, unobserved.
- Inside the Temple of the Goddess Diana, Emily moves from pillar to pillar, each carved fantastically like winter trees without leaves. She runs a hand in admiration over one.
- Arcite runs his hand over the mane of the black marble stallion sensuously. Reluctantly, he leaves the horse and approaches the huge statue of the God Mars.

INT. TEMPLE OF THE GODDESS VENUS - DAY

Palamon kneels before the life-size statue of the Goddess Venus and looks up to her. He prays.

PALAMON

Venus, Goddess of love, have mercy on me. Must I slay my cousin to win my lady? It doesn't matter to me if I win or lose. Love is all I care about. Give me my Lady and I shall worship you always.

INT. TEMPLE OF DIANA - CONTINUOUS

Dropping her robe, Emily wades into the pool up to her waist and looks up to the GODDESS DIANA, arms spread in supplication.

EMILY

O Diana, thou chaste goddess of the wildwood green, you know that for all my years my desire has been only to serve you. I love the hunt and to go rambling and riding in the wild, and had not thought to be a wife, or be with child. Diana, goddess of the hunt - I had not craved the company of men. And yet - this Palamon, who bears such love for me and whose letters have so touched my heart, and this Arcite, who risked his own life to save mine - these two, who loved each other all their lives, now go to war over me. Let not one of them kill the other. Oh goddess Diana, turn their hearts away from me. Restore the love between them. But if, chaste goddess, it is my destiny to become wife to one of them -- then let it be he who loves me best.

INT. TEMPLE OF THE GOD MARS - CONTINUOUS

Arcite looks up to forbidding GOD MARS and pulls his sword out in salute.

ARCITE

Great Mars, god of war. None may
withstand you. Your heart has been
torn like mine. Give me the
victory and my sword shall be
yours forever.

A huge chain rattles somewhere close by. Arcite turns to stare at the great torch-lit iron doors, which are beginning to slowly close with a loud creak. Unseen from the shadows, Theseus strains to pull a great chain.

A great howling wind blows leaves into the temple. They sweep in then out into the early morning forest, where a massive hart crashes through the brush.

THE GODDESS VENUS (VO)

(remotely, as if over-
heard at a party or
large gathering)

Mars, Palamon shall have his lady.

THE GOD MARS (VO)

Venus, my man *shall* have his victory.

Emily and the Goddess Diana race in light tunics on both sides of the hart with notched bow and arrows. They shoot into his neck and he falls in a heap. It begins to rain. Emily approaches him.

From high up, criss-crossing branches form a tree throne for a watching Theseus, his face dripping from the rain. He hears:

THE GOD SATURN (VO)

Now Venus, weep no more.

THE GODDESS VENUS (VO)

(tearfully)

Saturn --

THE GOD SATURN (VO)

Though Mars may help his man, yet
nonetheless, between you two there
must come sometime peace.

Emily bends over the hart.

THE GODDESS DIANA

The hart --

The hart lurches, jumps up, catches Emily in his horns, and
tosses her.

THE GODDESS DIANA

He's tough to kill.

Blood and arrows gone, he bounds off. Emily lands in a soft pile
of leaves and flower petals. An earthquake trembles and Emily
looks alarmed. Shaking leaves rise into the air around her.

THE GOD SATURN (VO)

That's enough, Pluto.

The earthquake stops. Leaves freeze in midair. Emily looks
around unnerved.

THE GOD SATURN (VO)

Pluto, we need to talk.

The leaves are snatched by a swift whirlwind and carried up and
then drift down onto a satin covered bed where Palamon lies. A
mild tremor startles him and he opens his eyes to see the
Goddess Venus floating several feet higher; her gown and hair
move becomingly as if under water.

THE GODDESS VENUS

There is always a price. Are you
willing to pay it to have her?

The hart charges through and away in a forested background.
Above are sky and clouds; below the bed is a black void where
some of the leaves fall down, down onto Arcite's head and
shoulders. He sits mounted on an impatient black stallion.

The God Mars stands next to the horse. The sound of the chain creaking and rattling is heard.

THE GOD MARS

You try my patience -- so, before
the gates close --

He slaps the black stallion's rump. The stallion, now with large marble-white eyes, with Arcite on his back, lurches forward towards the doors. Arcite charges through a whirlwind of leaves.

The walls of the temple to right and left are gone, replaced by the dark spectre of war on the right and a burning city on the left. In a sweat, Theseus pulls on the great chain.

A bright blue sky shows through the iron doors, which are creaking to a close, pulled by the massive taut chain. In the distance through the doors the hart appears and stops to look at Arcite.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Zoom in on the hart's face.
- Pull back from the hart's opposite side to reveal that the stand-alone doors of the God Mars temple and their dark interior now frame the hart within a forest setting.
- Faintly, but growing louder, the sound of a horse's galloping steps on stone is heard.
- Pull back further to reveal Emily breathlessly watching the hart.
- Reveal water rising without a ripple around an astonished Emily, the hart watching her with curiosity.
- Leaves float on the water, its surface reflecting the faces of the medieval pilgrims.
- Palamon is slowly beginning to fall through clouds in a space of swirling leaves and flowers.

- The water rises up and over Emily. Now under water, she is beginning to panic.
- Palamon is falling and flailing about in a torrent of rain, leaves, and flowers.
- To the roaring sound of the grating chain, the pounding hooves and the driving rain, Arcite's black stallion leaps a chasm yawning before the great iron doors, which are nearly closed. A cock crows.

BACK TO PRESENT - EARLY MORNING

Theseus is tangled up in the sheets thrashing about. Hypolyta shakes him.

HYPOLYTA

Wake up, my Lord.

Theseus opens his eyes and focuses on his Queen.

HYPOLYTA

It was just a dream.

THESEUS

Was it?

Outside there are sounds of movement and the beginning of a crowd gathering, reminiscent of the party gods' background sounds. The beginning of dawn light can be seen.

EXT. THE ARENA - EARLY MORNING

Workers raise the king's pavilion in the stands. Blister and Cane lead horses into a small corral near the arena. Emily's black stallion is among them. Cane spots it.

CANE

What's the black stallion doing
here?

Blister ignores him.

CANE

Wait til I tell Ma.

Blister glares at him.

The arena stands are filling with people, many carrying and wearing flowers. In a huge dressing chamber below the stands, the 50 warriors are grimly suiting up for combat.

Arcite's group wears red tunics; Palamon's, blue. The stands continue to fill. Apo and Con are at ground level to one side of the arena field with Dee, the two boys, and Mary.

Theseus, Hypolyta, Pirothus, and retainers arrive. The crowd claps as they take their seats in the pavilion section.

INT. BELOW THE ARENA - LATER

Beneath the stands, all the warriors are strapping on armor. Palamon himself is struggling to strap up his breast plate, and one of his men begins to help him. Wincing, Palamon looks stoically to the side. Arcite sees and instinctively moves to help him.

ARCITE

(to Palamon's helper)

Not like that! Here, let me do it.

Arcite works smoothly and gently. Palamon's pain and sense of suffocation ease. All activity in the room has halted. All watch the cousins, who astutely avoid eye contact.

Then, Lycergius moves to a surprised Emetrius and begins carefully to strap him up. This chivalrous gesture is repeated throughout the room, until both red and blue tunic-clad warriors are quietly helping each other -- all knowing that this might be their last day alive.

Palamon is completing the finishing touches on Arcite's armor, when he realizes the room has become completely silent. There in the midst of the nearly dressed warriors stands the lone and beautifully dressed Emily. All the warriors kneel, followed by the two kings and Palamon and Arcite in close succession.

Emily surveys the assembly graciously and then moves towards the princes. She extends her hands, one to each, which they kiss, Arcite with a noble passion and Palamon with a lingering poetic worshipfulness. Emily gravely surveys the proud and brave men.

Suddenly the men bow their heads. Theseus appears behind Emily, who is surprised.

THESEUS

We have considered that for any of you noble men to be slain would be a great loss, particularly for all the women with hopes of dancing with you at the wedding to follow.

(Emily smiles in spite of herself.)

Therefore, so that none need perish, We modify Our first purpose. No man may thrust with sword or stab with dagger. If any man falls wounded, he is not to be killed but carried from the field. Any man who is forced out of the barriers on each side must remain there. If the leader of either side is captured, slain, or pushed out of bounds, the tourney shall end. God speed you! Take swords and fight your fill.

EMILY

(to all)

For love --

ALL

For love --

THESEUS

-- and for chivalry!

ALL

And for --

EXT. ARENA FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Pull back to reveal the 50 knights in an arena, kneeling with swords held overhead on opposite sides of the arena's field.

ALL

-- chivalry!

The crowd cheers. In the pavilion, Hypolyta stands between Theseus and Emily.

The Herald kneels before Emily, holding up a pillow with a ram's horn on it. They share an appreciative look. Emily rises, takes the horn, and blows a long sweet peal. The crowd roars.

Palamon and Arcite turn and charge at each other across the arena, followed closely by their red and blue team members, swords raised up high.

There's a general melee with both sides trying to best the other. The blues drive a red out of bounds. A blue goes down, injured by a sword swipe. Lycergus and Emetrius battle each other, neither gaining the advantage, complex combinations of battles in twos and threes swirling around them.

LATER

Huge drums announce a break. The warriors stop fighting. The crowd cheers their approval. Physicians and assistants scurry out to the field to carry off the fallen.

Those still standing on the field retire to their respective rest areas. Servants race to them with huge plates filled with food and drink. The warriors dive in with feverish gusto.

Cane leans on the horse corral fence, studying the warriors from a distance. The sun beats down.

Several of the blues look on as a Nordic warrior draws some tactical ideas in the sand.

Con paces behind them, glancing with anxiety towards Palamon, who stands alone deep in thought.

Theseus surveys first Emily and Hypolyta close by, then the arena warriors. He nods to the head drummer. The drums begin a brief cadence to mark the end of the first rest period.

The remaining blues ready themselves in three tightly packed rows of four warriors each behind Palamon and Lycergius.

The reds are in an apparently non-organized clump of 12, with Emetrius and Arcite in the center.

On Theseus' signal, an aide blows the ram's horn. Immediately the reds begin to stride rapidly forward, but the blues adopt a modest jog.

Twenty feet apart, Palamon and Lycergius halt. The first rank behind them moves forward of them, providing a loose protective wall. The blues have halted.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- The three foremost reds engage the two right flank front blues. One red takes on the two left flank blue warriors.
- This creates a gap in the blue center. A rear blue rushes to aid his beleaguered front-flank blue, which pulls and spreads the line.
- Arcite moves to aid the lone red. Emetrius follows, but through the gap, four blues rush at Emetrius, cutting him off from Arcite.
- Lycergius is left alone momentarily. Two more reds join the attack on Palamon. The remaining rear blues join the attack on Arcite. Lycergius rushes to the defense of Palamon.
- Three of the rear reds rush to Arcite's defense. The remaining red engages one of the blues, who is attempting to work around to Emetrius' rear.
- Lycergius takes down a man. Emetrius does in two. A red near Arcite falls. Arcite drops back behind his defenders, who fight off five blues.
- The sixth blue charges the solo-engaged Emetrius.

- Palamon takes down his red.
- Emetrius puts down his two blues.
- Arcite is suddenly fighting two blues.
- Lycergius takes down a red, leaving one red against Lycergius, a blue, and Palamon.
- A blue rushes to help push Arcite out of bounds, but Emetrius cuts him off and drops him.
- Lycergius leaves his group to engage the solo central red.
- Palamon and his blue push their man out of bounds.
- Emetrius takes down one of the two blues on Arcite, just shy of the barrier. This leaves just one blue, whom they push out of bounds.
- Lycergius drops his man.
- The drums sound again, leaving six blue and five red warriors standing.

Arcite and Palamon turn to walk back to their team resting places, followed by the remainder of the warriors. Emetrius and Lycergius eye each other across the field for a lingering moment, then follow their teams to their rest areas.

Palamon looks up into the Royal Pavilion at Emily. In the stands, Emily feels something and looks down into the blue team area to see Palamon's gaze on her.

Over at the red team, Arcite watches Palamon and Emily looking at each other.

ARCITE

I'll kill him.

Emily moves her gaze over to Arcite. She stands up.

SERIES OF SHOTS

-- Surprised, Palamon turns to see Arcite has left his team's rest area and is running across the field towards him.

-- Palamon strides onto the field to meet him.

-- Both Emetrius and Lycergius race after their leaders.

On reaching Palamon, Arcite's first clash knocks Palamon's sword away. Arcite cocks his sword to finish Palamon. He hesitates. There is no hate in Palamon's eyes. The anger drains from Arcite.

Emily and the crowd watch with bated breath.

Lycergius charges Arcite. Emetrius throws his jeweled sword in an arc over the cousins. Lycergius parries the sword up and away.

Palamon has the wind knocked out of him as Emetrius plows into him, lifts him, carries him a dozen running steps to the barrier, and dumps him over it.

The jeweled sword comes down and stabs into the earth, quivering.

The ram's horn blows. It's over. The crowd is uncertain how to respond. Palamon stands and looks in agony at Arcite. Theseus and Emily look at each other. Emily smiles tentatively. Theseus smiles back at her, nods once, and stands up.

All is quiet.

THESEUS

(shouting to the
crowd)

Prince Arcite has won and shall
have Emily for his wife!

Arcite looks up to Emily, who graces him with a warm smile. The crowd begins to cheer. Musicians burst onto the field with triumphant music. Dancers wearing flowers and swinging colorful streamers begin to fill the arena.

Palamon looks upon Arcite in a painful mixture of loss and pride. Tables are carried out and quickly covered with a delectable feast. A tent decorated with ivy and flower garlands is set up at one end of the arena.

Emily and Hypolyta embrace.

Arcite sees a smiling Blister lead the black stallion in a trot out to him.

Behind the corral fence, an unconscious Cane lies prostrate.

Emily sees her stallion and begins to register alarm.

Arcite senses something is wrong. Shrugging it off, he proudly mounts the great steed and bounds off at a gallop around the arena field to the deafening cheers of the crowd.

At the point farthest from Emily, he turns her stallion for a charge across the arena straight at the royal pavilion. His speed mounts; he spreads his arms up and out to collect the crowd's wild adulation. Dancers with streamers part like a sea.

A small earthquake begins. In the tremor, Emetrius's sword flickers with the sun's reflection.

The flickering light plays wildly over the stallion's eyes. He halts and rears high, up and over, throwing Arcite and landing on him, the saddle bow crushing his chest.

The earthquake diminishes and stops. The stunned crowd and warriors are motionless for a beat. Then the horse struggles to his feet and runs off, leaving an immobile Arcite.

EMILY

Arcite!

She races down the stands. Palamon runs to his cousin.

EMILY

(arriving at his side)

Arcite!

A PHYSICIAN arrives to examine Arcite's prostrate form. Arcite tries to move but can't.

Palamon runs up, stopping at the sight of Emily attending Arcite.

Theseus strides onto the field, pausing to drop a surprised Blister with a backhand cuff. He continues on to Arcite and the examining physician. Theseus glances at the stricken faces of Palamon and Emily, and then looks to the pain-wracked Arcite. The physician rises.

THE PHYSICIAN

Your Majesty, he can't be moved.

Theseus looks up to see the Head Cook and Musicians looking at him for direction. Hypolyta comes up to Theseus. The physician returns to tend Arcite.

HYPOLYTA

What should we do?

THESEUS

The wedding will have to wait.

(looking at Arcite)

If there is a wedding at all.

HYPOLYTA

I'll tell Emily.

Hypolyta moves to Emily's side.

ARCITE

Emily --

Emily moves to put his head on her lap.

ARCITE

Oh, my lady -- My heart's own queen.

His eyes close, his breathing labored.

HYPOLYTA

Emily. The wedding - we'll --

EMILY

We'll have it now.

HYPOLYTA

Emily, I don't think --

EMILY

Do we leave our men when they have
fallen? Do we walk away when they
need us most? Or do we fight by
their sides, come what may?

Hypolyta touches Emily's face, then moves away to talk to
Theseus. Palamon comes to Arcite's side, kneeling. Arcite's eyes
open and he sees Palamon.

ARCITE

Palamon.

Palamon takes his hand.

PALAMON

You can't die now, you idiot. You
have to save the Princess.

ARCITE

I know.

The musicians strike up a joyful tune. Some take that as a cue
that Arcite will live, and begin to dance. The mood lightens
around them.

Servants arrive carrying the wedding tent and place it over
them.

Theseus, Hypolyta, Pirothus, Lycergius and Emetrius gather
round. The musicians bring their tune to an end.

Palamon lets go Arcite's hand as Arcite and Emily look up at
Theseus.

THESEUS

One year and one day ago, I made
to you a promise. For love, and
for chivalry. A promise to you,
Emily, not to slay these two love-
sick knights on the spot. A
promise to you, Arcite and
Palamon, that one of you, as
Fortune should decree, should win
Emily to be his wife. These
promises are fulfilled. Arcite and
Emily are now husband and wife!
May the gods look favorably on
you, and grant you - long life.

Arcite smiles and then catches his breath in pain. The physician
gives him an herb drink. The musicians strike up a happy tune
again. Emily kisses Arcite and Palamon looks away.

ARCITE

My soul's dear lady. My wife!

He tries to move, but is pierced with pain. Emily holds him.
Palamon moves quickly to his side. Emily and Palamon each hold
one of Arcite's hands. Arcite focuses painfully on Emily's face.
Then, with a supreme effort:

ARCITE

Emily, there's something I need to
say. For jealousy we fought over
you. And who was I fighting but a
faithful, generous man -- an
honorable knight who lives in
humility - and loves you.

(turning to Palamon)

My cousin, my dearest friend,
Palamon.

Arcite grips Palamon's hand more firmly, then turns back to
Emily.

ARCITE

I know of no one as worthy of your
love as Palamon, who will serve
you --

Emily cuts off Arcite's words with a few fingers on his lips, then withdraws them. He looks into her eyes with the deepest gratitude. Tears begin to flow from his eyes.

ARCITE

What is this world? What does a
man look for? Finding love at the
last,
Then set in the cold grave, alone.
Farewell my Lady, my Emily.

Emily isn't ready to say goodbye, but Arcite turns to Palamon.

ARCITE

Palamon.

PALAMON

I'm here.

ARCITE

Take my sword.

Palamon takes it. Arcite holds Palamon's hand on the hilt.

ARCITE

(weakly)

It's your turn, Philostrates.

His grip slackens.

ARCITE'S VISION - TEMPLE OF MARS - DAY *with no sound,*

Arcite, mounted on the black stallion, leaps a great chasm through huge iron doors that are closing on him. The horse clears the doors into a lush grassy plain with a vivid blue sky. ~~Silently~~ ^{And} the great doors shut out the sight of the beautiful plain.

BACK TO SCENE

Arcite's eyes close and his breath expires. Emily and Palamon are overcome with grief.

THESEUS

Arcite is gone. Mars guides his
soul on high.

Dee turns and buries her face into Apo's shoulder.

Theseus looks at Palamon, then turns to Pirothus.

THESEUS

Build a funeral pyre. Here. Now.

PIROTHUS

What?! We used up all the wood
around Athens to build this arena!

Theseus strides up to the banner pole of "blues," draws his sword in a blinding sweep, and re-sheaths it in one smooth motion, then turns to Pirothus.

THESEUS

Well, use it again.

Reveal a perfect horizontal cut through the banner pole as it crashes to the ground. All are stunned for a moment. Then Palamon moves to the huge pole and picks up its end and begins dragging it. Pirothus picks up the other end and the two dump it in the center of the arena.

In the crowd there is a stirring. A man stands, pounds free a wooden handrail and begins to carry it down to the arena. Two others pick up a vacated bench and carry it down. By an unspoken understanding, the entire arena audience sets to work.

Emily washes Arcite's face with a damp cloth. A servant arrives with a bowl of water. Lycergius takes the bowl and kneels beside Emily, watching her with tenderness. Emily glances at him, then dips her cloth in the bowl and continues to wash Arcite.

A pyre is beginning to form under Pirothus' direction. Palamon helps carry materials.

Hypolyta kneels beside Emily, who determinedly washes Arcite, holding back her tears. Hypolyta looks at Lycergius.

EXT. ARENA FIELD - TWILIGHT

All that remains of the stadium are the three lone temples, the giant funeral pyre structure, and the people.

At Arcite's side, Hypolyta holds Emily. Palamon comes to the other side and looks at Emily, sick with the pain he has caused her.

Palamon lifts Arcite's body and carries him up crude steps to the top of the pyre, laying him on a bed prepared there. Palamon clasps Arcite's hand one last time and turns away.

Theseus moves to a small raised platform in front of the pyre.

Behind Theseus a torch gutters in its holder, stuck into the pyre structure. Theseus is illuminated by torches in front of him. Palamon and Emily stand on both sides of him, each bearing an unlit torch.

THESEUS

Earth, air, fire, and water. God binds all of these with chains of love. He brought into being all of the ways of the world, the seasons, the durations, the span of a life. Behold the mighty oak and the great time it takes to grow into maturity. Behold the great cities. But then, the oak wastes away and the cities turn to dust. And why? Because God calls everything back again into the source from which they came. Rebelling against this is folly. Yet we rail against Arcite's fate. And will he thank us for that? He cannot. He cannot. Instead, let us honor him whose final hour struck in the summer of his days, at the height of his fame, and at the moment when we would best remember his good name. Arcite is free of the prison of this life. And safely home with Him who made the stars.

Theseus surveys the crowd. He turns and takes the torch behind him and lights Emily's and Palamon's extended torches. The three walk to their positions and in turn light the pyre structure.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- The flames climb to a peaceful Arcite at the top of the pyre.
- Emetrius walks to his jeweled sword still sticking in the ground undisturbed, pulls it, walks to the conflagration, and throws it in.
- Lycergius takes the cue and throws in his sword. The other mostly wounded warriors follow suit with their weapons.
- Palamon adds his armor to the offering.
- The huge conflagration begins to collapse as night falls.
- Gradually the crowd melts away, leaving royalty, Pirothus, Con, Apo, and Lady Dee.

Emily, standing by Lycergius, collapses in emotional exhaustion. He catches her and carries her from the field, her face buried in his chest. Lady Dee and Apo follow, arm in arm.

Emetrius touches Palamon's shoulder in sympathy and exits. Hypolyta and Pirothus each touch Palamon in turn and exit together, Hypolyta holding the arm of Pirothus and leaning her head onto his shoulder.

Now black and twisted upon the charcoal mound lies Emetrius' jeweled sword.

Down falls a snowy ash, illuminated by the moon. It covers the field and temples.

Theseus, in his turn, touches Palamon's arm.

Palamon cannot speak. Theseus leaves.

The ever-faithful Con stands several paces behind Palamon, waiting. Rain begins to fall.

PALAMON
(looking up)
Venus.

It washes away the ash from Palamon's face. Like a small child, Con approaches, shyly takes Palamon's hand, and leads him away.

The rain stops, the clouds clear, and the moon and stars shine on the three temples.

INT. MEDIEVAL TAVERN - DAY

The Knight stands before a crowd of pilgrims, all crying except the Monk and Summoner. The Wife of Bath wails; the Miller blubbers. Huddled together, the children weep.

KNIGHT
Great were the sorrows and the
tears of old folk and folk of
tender years.

WIFE OF BATH
Why did he have to die? He was
rich enough.

NUN
And he had Emily.

MONK
This world is but a thoroughfare
of woe --

FRANKLIN
And we are pilgrims passing to and
fro.

KNIGHT
For weeks, Palamon wandered like a
ghost through Athens. Princess
Emily wrapped herself in a cloak
of grief and drew away from the
world that must go on day by day
without her.

INT. PALACE CENTRAL HALL - DAY

Emily, in black, sits staring. Dee brings her a parchment scroll from her collection of stories, but Emily takes no notice. Dee sets it beside Emily, looking concerned, and leaves.

Emily sees Apo enter the King's chamber. She sees the parchment and runs her fingers over it, then rises, leaving it on the bench, and walks off aimlessly

INT. PALACE PRISON ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Palamon sits on one of the cots examining Arcite's wooden sword. He sets it down and crosses to the small table that still has the chess set on it. He lowers his face to look at the little pilgrims that earnestly face each other and sees Arcite's carved elephant face looking back just as earnestly.

EXT. PALACE GARDEN - DAY

Emily sits on a blanket and solemnly weaves grasses into flowerless garlands. Palamon sees her from the garden path and starts to move toward her, when a lovely flower leans out from a bush in front of him.

Reveal Con's stubby finger pressing the stem forward. Surprised, Palamon gets the idea to give it to Emily and plucks it. He approaches her quietly and startles her.

PALAMON

I'm sorry, I didn't mean --

Emily looks at the flower as if she doesn't recognize what it is.

PALAMON

Here.

He hands her the flower. Emily accepts it, staring at it.

EMILY

(coming to)

Thank you. Please --

(indicates for him to sit)

I haven't seen you in some time.

They both stare at the flower.

PALAMON

It's red.

EMILY

Yes.

PALAMON

Arcite always chose red. Flowers,
I mean. Well, most things. He
liked red.

Palamon hesitates, then sits, watching her. Emily looks at the flower as if seeing one for the first time in years. She studies its beauty.

EMILY

It is red.

PALAMON

They're so difficult.

EMILY

Difficult?

PALAMON

To paint -- flowers.

EMILY

Flowers --

PALAMON

This time of year -- the seasons --
- I mean, the colors -- are so --

EMILY

They change.

PALAMON

Yes. Yes, and there's something so
-- so mysterious --

EMILY

Yes...

PALAMON

Each vein -- how it's bathed --

EMILY

The rain?

PALAMON

Venus --

EMILY

Tears.

PALAMON

Yes. And how the flower --

EMILY

Thirsts for them...

PALAMON

They give life --

EMILY

To the flower...

PALAMON

Yes!

EMILY

Their beauty --

PALAMON

Like yours -

Suddenly embarrassed, Palamon notices a bee on Emily's flower and tries to swat it away but it comes after him. He jumps up, flailing frantically until the bee is gone. Emily laughs, for the first time since before Arcite died.

Palamon feels foolish. Emily smiles, feeling life beginning again. It's contagious. Palamon smiles, too.

A sudden wind fills the air around them with flower petals from the nearby cherry trees, reminiscent of a dream. Emily pulls her shawl close around her instinctively.

PALAMON

You're cold.

EMILY

No. I feel warmer than I have in weeks.

PALAMON

(almost fearful)

You musn't get cold.

EMILY

It's all right.

PALAMON

Dee!

(Dee appears)

She shouldn't be out in this wind.

(he helps Emily up)

EMILY

The flower.

Palamon picks it up and hands it to her. Their hands touch and they look up at each other. Palamon freezes for a moment, then looks away.

EMILY

Thank you.

She starts to turn away.

PALAMON

Emily...

EMILY

Yes?

Palamon looks yearningly at her. Her eyes search his face. They step to each other instinctively, taking hands, then embracing.

Pull back gradually to a long shot of Emily and Palamon embracing in the garden, as the clopping sound of walking horses steadily grows louder.

KNIGHT (VO)

Palamon and Emily were married.

FADE TO:

EXT. ON THE ROAD TO CANTERBURY, MEDIEVAL ENGLAND - DAY

KNIGHT (VO)

Emily loved him so tenderly and he served her so faithfully that a cross or unkind word never marred their happiness. Thus ends the tale of Palamon and Emily.

The pilgrims have resumed their journey on two side-by-side lines of slowly walking horses.

Slowly zoom to the Nun (Emily) and the Clerk (Palamon) chatting happily as they ride. The pilgrim Knight follows on his horse, and riding next to him is a contented Wife of Bath (Hypolyta).

On the next pair of horses are the Squire (Arcite) and the Lawyer (Apo) riding side-by-side, picking apart points in the tale. Following them are the Miller (Blister) and the Host (Cane).

MILLER

I know a tale --

HOST

Now, Robin, you are drunk. Let some other --

Next, the Franklin (Pirothus) and the Prioress (Antigone).

PRIORESS

(to the Franklin with
tears in her eyes)

He carried her letter next to his
heart.

The Little Man (Con), leading the same horse, runs past the pilgrim line, destination unknown. Zoom into Knight's face watching the short man with a grin.

Pull back to see the Knight twist around in his saddle to broadly address all the pilgrims.

KNIGHT

And may God save all this fair
company!

PILGRIMS

Hurrah! Hurrah!

Pull back to reveal the double line of pilgrims as they amble happily along their way.

FADE OUT